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NUMBER of The ILLUSTRATED

SPORTING & DRAMATIC

NEWS! HOLLY LEAVES



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(By a F. S. A. of Eighty Years of Age.)

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NEWS
"HOLLY LEAVES"

Nos. 307 & 308.—VOL. XII.

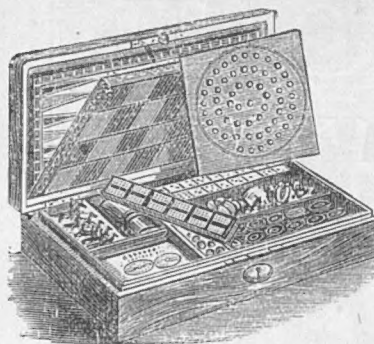
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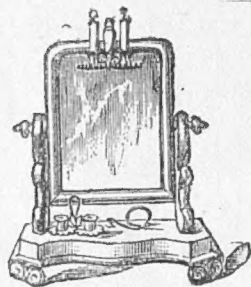
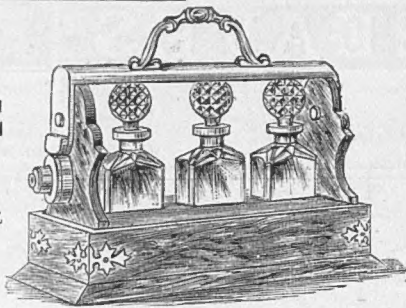
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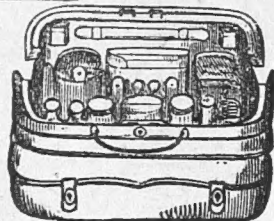
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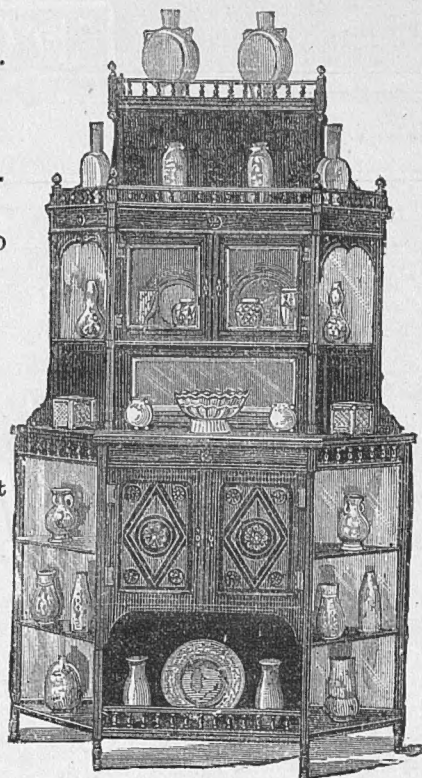
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THE ILLUSTRATED Sporting and Dramatic News.

LONDON, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1879.

“HOLLY LEAVES.”

A VOTIVE wreath each season weaves
To deck the Genius of the hour
With branch or blossom, fruit or flower;
And thus this crown of holly leaves

For dull December's brow we twine,
Green leaves and berries coral red,
In place of garlands sere and dead
That best befit the year's decline.

Long flourish, tardy growth and slow,
Wearing thy tresses evergreen,
Reflecting in their ebon sheen
The wintry sunbeam's faintest glow;

Dark denizen of gloom and shade,
Unheeded summer woods among,
Where branching bowers are rife with song
And livelier greens o'erarch the glade;

Yet, when beneath bleak autumn gales
The giants of the forest bow
Their groaning heads in meekness low,
And all their golden glory fails:

When leafy spoils, a tribute meet,
Of all that bend beneath his yoke,
From earliest ash to latest oak,
Lie trophied at stern Winter's feet:—

Thou reignest in thy pride alone
Mid naked boughs and branches bare
Rearing a prickly crown in air;
Like monarch rooted to his throne,

Who hears the crash of falling realms,
And thrones down-gliding to decay;
The while he holds his steadfast way
Disdainful of the storm that whelms.

E'en so, when summer friendships fail,
And waning life's autumnal slope
Is strewn with blasted leaves of hope
That flutter down Misfortune's gale;—

When those we loved and honoured most
With scornful coldness turn aside,
Nor care their altered looks to hide,
But of desertion make their boast;—

Some staunch upholder do we find,
[When all obsequious round us press,
Unknown for show of forwardness,
And held, perchance, of careless kind:]

Yet shall he, when the false have flown,
Remain with ancient friends to share
The hour of darkness and despair,
In time of peril stauncher grown.

Meet emblems ye of Friendship's might,
Dark leaves, the bristling holly's crown,
When wintry woods lie sere and brown,
Charming the eye with green delight!

What brighter task, what cheerier lot
Than yours, in berried pride, to grace
The halls that hold a royal race,
The bareness of the shepherd's cot?

But chiefly now, when Love must yield
For once to Friendship—short reprieve
From yoke of vassalage—and leave
His rival master of the field;

'Tis now that cronies, primed with ale,
Draw closer round the blaze or board,
Like misers, reckoning all their hoard
Of crusted joke and parious tale:

Young Love is dead, but Friendship thrives,—
The time, the season, and the hour
Bear silent witness to his power,
Who mellow all their ancient lives.

Then timely crown with holly leaves
His wrinkled front and scanty hair
In snowy whiteness glistening there,
Like hoary pendants from the eaves:

And haste with tributary spray
To consecrate the ancient hall,
Till roof and rafter, beam and wall,
Bedizened all in green array,

Give token of old custom kept,
Old usage honoured, ancient rites
Observed as erst on Christmas nights,
In houses garnished, chambers swept.

Let humble hand with gentle vie
In playing each its ready part
In plain or decorative art
For simple or æsthetic eye.

But yet, with diplomatic skill,
To female hands the task confine
Of working out each gay design
With branches bending to their will:

For as of old Actæon rued
Intrusion on Diana's bath,
And fled, the victim of her wrath,
With antlers to his forehead glued—

So now a second huntsman smarts
Beneath the ire of injured maids,
Who thus the sanctuary invades
Where decorators ply their arts.

Vain terrors of uplifted thong,
And muttered growl of crouching hound!
Like wasps they buzz his ears around,
And still the agony prolong

Of brandished holly leaves that ply
His reddening ears and smarting cheeks;
Those scars shall tell a tale for weeks
Of what he took by playing pry.

And loud and long the laugh shall chide
His escapade in days to come,
Beguiling weary journeys home,
And bleak delays by covert side:

And oft as Yule returning weaves
A prickly crown, and laughter wakes
To greet the time of ale and cakes,
Shall wake the cry, “War’ holly leaves!”

AMPHION.

THE POOR PLAYER: A PROGRESSIVE ROMANCE.

By GILBERT A BECKETT.

BOOK I.

THE DEAD OF NIGHT. 1586.

Ah, wherefore cast me for Macbeth!
For though on honour's path I tread,
You'll find when they announce my death,
I might as well have spared my breath,
And not thrown up the armed head.

The Leading Man's Lament.

It was past noon on a chill and drear October day in the now long-vanished and forgotten year 1586, that, somewhat sheltered from the rain in the stage-entrance to the old Blackfriars Playhouse, a figure stood watching with the impatience of anxious hope the countenance of the door-keeper on duty. The latter, however, seemed as far removed from sympathy as from sunlight. Seated on the right of the narrow passage, behind half a door in a small linen cupboard, the sole furniture of which consisted of a cracked slate and a letter rack, he eyed the stranger leisurely with that satisfied contempt which is born alone of long habit.

For, in the days of which we write, the stage-door of the theatre had yet to become an institution. It was not then that luxurious lounge with which young dramatists are so agreeably familiar in this our time. The elegant and cushioned ante-room where they are wont to while away a pleasant five minutes as they wait with their respective MSS., the scrupulous and considerate courtesy of the porter, the instant communication with the manager, and the general bright and cheery aspect of the whole place, these were things unknown in the grim savage light that saw the close of the sixteenth century. Then the aspiring author who presented himself for the purpose of offering a new piece to the management was not unfrequently regarded as a troublesome tradesman begging for a job. Since that suspicious and ungenial epoch things have wonderfully changed. But let us proceed with our story.

The doorkeeper finished his stare. He appeared to have taken in the business of the new-comer. Then he broke silence. “Marry, but if you have got anything to leave for the giv’nor,” he said, sulkily, “you may give it here. He’ll get it.”

The tone was familiar, but it lacked sympathy. The stranger felt it. A faint flush suffused his fine broad marble forehead.

“I have nothing to leave, fellow,” he replied, quietly. “Mr. Burbage has something of mine, and I have been expecting to hear from him. And if you will advertise him that I am here—”

The porter regarded the stranger anxiously.

“Hath he an appointment with you?” he asked, sharply, cutting his interlocutor short, and rising with the air of a man confident of having played a trump question.

“Well, no—not exactly.” The stranger faltered a little, but his pride was touched, and he continued with gathering assurance. “That is, he hath no appointment, but I warrant you he would wish to see me.”

“Warrant me nothing. You must write.” The porter sat down as he said this. The other grew a trifle paler. But he went on.

“You can carry my name to him, addlepatie,” he said, with kindling annoyance.

“Addlepatie thyself? How can I carry your name to him? Can I leave this door? No, not for you, nor for the Queen’s Majesty. I tell you he’s busy, and can’t be fretted o’er such business as yours! A plague on’t!”

It was a rude and rough age, and those who courted Thespis in her daylight haunts had not unfrequently to listen to such language as this. But, though each cycle may have boasted manners of its own, humanity has been common to all. The stranger was but human. He was nettled.

“But grammarcy, he knoweth me,” he retorted with warmth. “I am Mr. Shakespeare—Mr. William Shakespeare—and I want—”

“I don’t care who you are, or what you want. You must write.”

“I shall wait, clown, and catch him coming out,” fiercely rejoined the Bard of Avon, for the quiet stranger was no other than the promising young author of the new and successful little five-act comedy, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. And he would probably have passed into the house by some cunning ruse, but that at that moment the door opened with a swing, and disclosed an advancing figure whose head-gear instantly attracted his attention. The new comer wore a well-shaped, comely felt, with a dapper feather, and cocked sideways to a nicety, in the true “Cheape” style. His hat was in effect brand new. In an instant the great observer of his age recognised that never-failing sign of management.

“How fares it with you, Mr. Burbage?” he said, brightening.

“Ah! of course, Shakespeare,” replied the other, clapping him who was “not for an age, but for all time,” familiarly on the shoulder. “I didn’t know you in the dark. Come about the ghost-piece, eh? Won’t do, my boy, won’t do. Public don’t care for Denmark, never heard of it. Couldn’t you make it Chelsea, now? There’s an idea for you! eh? But we’ll talk it over as we go down to the Scrubbes. You’re coming to poor Jynkyns’s funeral? You’ll come with us?” He pointed to a little fair-haired boy of eight, in deep mourning doublet and hose, as he spoke, with a significant nod. “Buried after sunset—sad business. We shall just do it if we walk sharply. Come along.”

The Swan of Stratford took the proffered arm mechanically, and the three set out.

“Hamlet, Prince of Chelsea,” he murmured to himself, thoughtfully, as they neared the old Fleete Ditch. “Yes, I suppose I could manage it!”

The rain was falling heavily now, and as the cold evening wind swept with a pitiless moan over the vast and bleak plain that stretched away from old London to the west, three figures that were standing by a broken patch of moist gravel where four roads met, set their faces towards the distant city, and moved on in silence. The manager and the poet were sad and thoughtful now, and the fair child, who trudged between them, held the hand of the latter, and looked up at the black night with still streaming eyes. It was a degrading, heart-breaking ceremony at which all three had assisted—the burial by the hangman of a man of genius as a rogue and vagabond on the common highway.

No funeral knell, no holy rite had marked the closing of this unconsecrated grave. Men should come and go, and pass over it for ever and for aye, with dishonouring feet, and the bones should whiten, rot, and fall to dust, e’er that better day should dawn which was to denounce the laying of them here as a sacrilege against humanity, and a dark spot of shame upon the fair seeming of a glittering but cruel age.

The great thinker was the first to break the sorrowing stillness of the homeward walk.

“A day will come,” he said, unconsciously forestalling the words of the great Fitzball, “a day will come when this barbarism shall be no more. Poor Jynkyns! he was a worthy, honest soul.”

“And the most useful man I ever got at his figure,” sadly added the kindly manager. “But I’ll take care of this little man. I can do him that service. Art tired, little one?” he said, and as he spoke, he took the wearied child into his arms. “Come, thou shalt ride back to London, and I will be thy pack horse.”

The pretty eyes looked softly at him through the darkness, and the little arms clasped him lovingly.

“Won’t the gentleman tell me a story?” he said, looking at Shakespeare wistfully.

“With pleasure,” said the bard with alacrity. And without more ado, he began in measured tones to repeat the whole of the first part of *Henry VI.*

Before he had reached the fifth act, the child had fallen into a sweet sleep.

BOOK II.

BEFORE THE SUNRISE. 1886.

And he is right who holds that taste is the one thing that outwits philosophy, for though we may fully sympathise with and appreciate the man who prefers to spread his toast with blacking rather than with butter, it is doubtful if we shall ever thoroughly understand him.—*Blinker’s History of Appetite.*

THREE hundred years have sped since the last shovelfull of earth was cast upon the poor player’s cross-road grave, and the events recorded in our opening chapter have long faded away, without note or remembrance, into the oblivion of the past.

But of the actors in that gloomy scene two have become immortal. The whole world has long bowed in reverence before the name of Shakespeare, and culture has learned to set a modest halo round the head of Burbage. And the fair child, their little companion on that weary walk? Has this living, breathing England no memorial of him?

This elegant yet studious chamber, this modern green room, which, with its comprehensive library, its pair of globes, and lecture slate, tells him who enters at a glance that the *Purified National, Moral, and Instructive Dramatic Co-operative Society* is an accomplished fact, may shed some light upon the matter.

A florid youth of some five-and-thirty summers, with whose chestnut locks time has tenderly but freely mingled a considerable quantity of white cotton, is standing near a green baize table on which lie an open book of manuscript and a glass of water. He has just finished the reading of his new play, and the company have risen, and are discussing in whispers its defects in little angry isolated groups. There is an earnest respectability about the whole scene which is edifying; and it is easy to gather from the faces of the “committee of management,” as they approach the hero of the hour, that if the first venture of the *Purified, National Moral, and Instructive Dramatic Co-operative Society* is not a success, it will not be for the want of improving suggestions during the progress of its rehearsal.

“It is an excellent piece, Mr. Jenkyns, and the way in which you have introduced those experiments with the air pump into the end of your first act does you credit. It is this sort of thing that will give tone to the stage. It is just what we want.”

It is an influential member of the committee, a distinguished F.R.S., who is addressing the rising author. The latter can but look pleased, and is about to reply when a venerable Archdeacon takes him gently aside. “Quite true, Mr. Jenkyns,” continues the Church dignitary, “quite true, your science is excellent; but I object to your method of handling the expression of human affection. What we must show the rising generation is something less sensuous than the *ἀνδρῶν* of the Greeks. I am sure I have the committee with me when I say you must cut out your heroine altogether. But as Seneca has it, ‘post malam segetem serendum est,’ you can fill up the gap by giving more moral philosophy to your hero. I have a volume of sermons that I should like you to look at before you begin to write up his part.”

It is the Chairman who is speaking now. A faint colour has come into the full cheek of the listening author. Is it that the dramatic instinct, inherited through a long line of solicitors from his dead ancestor, tells him that this worthy ecclesiastic may never have written even the opening of a pantomime? Who knows? For he is about to stammer some excuse, when a voice, the natural sweetness of which is somewhat marred by irritation, breaks the silence. It is that of the principal lady of the company, and though, in conformity with the regulations of the establishment, she is accompanied by her mother and two responsible elderly male relatives on her father’s side, it is evident that she has been wounded to the quick, and means resentment. “I am not going to stand this,” she cries, flashing a threatening glance at the venerable committee, “Mr. Jenkyns has written the piece for me. It is my part that is the part—and what’s more, not a line of it goes!”

It is a determined announcement, and at first takes the arch-deacon by surprise. But in the discharge of his managerial duties he has once had to face Macbeth, after eliminating five of his longest speeches, his conversation with the witches and his final fight, and he is prepared with a reply.

“Pew-opener—I mean prompter,” he says, huskily, “I regret it, but you must fine this young lady one and sixpence.”

There is an angry murmur, chiefly from those who are dissatisfied with their parts. A storm seems inevitable. The heroine of the moment shows no disposition to shirk it.

“That, for the whole lot of you!” she cries, indignantly, snapping her fingers at the now astonished committee. “Gen-



SEEING THE OLD FOLKS HOME.



"HER LORD AND MASTER."

tle men you call yourselves, and elevators of the stage! Leave the stage to take care of itself!"

"But this is an infringement of Rule 297!" It is the Archdeacon who is roused now. "Look at the prospectus of the company," he retorts, indignantly. "Why, this woman must be an ordinary professional actress!"

"And I am proud to own it," she answers him with the hauteur of a Semiramis. In another instant Jenkyns is kneeling at her feet.

"Madam," he says, passionately, "I have long respected you for your talents. I now love you for yourself. I withdraw my piece. I cut out the air-pump, and every line you have shall stand. May I dare to hope?"

He has risen, and the fair girl has turned to him with grateful tears. But as proudly and with heads erect they near the door, they are met on the threshold by a flurried, stout old gentleman, whose likeness to the fat youth before him none can mistake. There is a little cry of horror; then the Archdeacon advances.

"I am addressing —?" he asks blandly.

"Jenkyns, Todd, Spragworth, and Jenkyns. I am the senior partner of the firm, sir; I am Jenkyns!"

"An honoured name in the City, sir," the Archdeacon replies solemnly. Then he proceeds; "Alas! Mr. Jenkyns, it is my painful duty to inform you that your son has given a severe shock to the finer susceptibilities of our little company. He has offered his hand in marriage to a professional actress!"

The solicitor has grown ashy white and thrown up his arms with a great cry of agony. "An actress! an actress!" he shouts, shaking the Archdeacon unconsciously but wildly by the throat. "An actress! Then the honour of the family has been wrecked—cruelly wrecked by my boy!"

The old man lets go the Archdeacon, and in doing so breaks down. They take him gently to a cab. "An actress!" he chatters between his teeth. "An actress!—when I had hoped to see him united to the daughter of a rich porkbutcher!"

BOOK III.

UNDER THE MERIDIAN. 2186.

THE DOGE: Gad, Odosalchi. An' what is thy business now?
ODOSALCHI: Marry, your grace, but this is Boxing night, and our clown is ill.

THE DOGE: A plague on thee, Mr. Manager. But thou hast tried the bravo?

ODOSALCHI: He dines out.

THE DOGE: Then the nobles? There be scores of them.

ODOSALCHI: They plead ignorance.

THE DOGE: An' they do, the knaves? Then the Council of Ten?

ODOSALCHI: They fear a double back somersault. Alack! There be no one.

THE DOGE: Gad, Odosalchi. Then I'll play it myself! —*Venice Improved.*

THE lovely summer day was over, and the sweet blue night, her canopy fretted with a myriad glistening fires, was stealing gently upon the hushed beauty of the scene. Stately Hammer-smith, with its princely palaces, lay hidden in its artificial orange groves to the south, while in the distant east the glare of the factory chimneys of busy Belgravia just tinged the far horizon. A few tame eagles from the ornithological parks of old Bayswater hovered dreamily above, and, but for the occasional shrill whirl of some aerial magnetic omnibus, full inside and out, cleaving its quiet way through the evening air, at the rate of four hundred miles an hour, scarce a sound was to be heard. The view from the great topmost terrace of the New Wormwood Scrubbs Wallhalla was very beautiful and soul-subduing, and the one solitary lingerer, a matured and handsome nobleman of five-and-forty, who hung over the massive jasper balustrade that crowned this splendid national recognition of British intellect, seemed fully alive to its soft influence.

Gazing idly at the towering statues of England's greatest worthies, that, arranged amidst beds of choicest annuals with a beautiful tea-garden precision, loomed, almost with an air of mystery, through the advancing darkness, it was with an effort that he mastered the emotion with which he struggled. And he might have fairly given way, but at that moment a poorly old gentleman, on whose head gleamed the gilt and red velvet of a coronet, shot suddenly out of the gloom, and after a few gyrations in the air to steady himself, alighted on the damp grass gently on his back. In another instant he had risen and the loiterer, who advanced as if he had been expecting him, was by his side. The latter spoke—

"The Duke of Hampton Wick—am I not right?" he asked courteously, with a low bow.

"Right you are, my boy," replied the great peer, using the refined phraseology of the select. "Ha! though the earldom of Langham Place has been in your family for two centuries, the good old actor's blood of your race—the Jinkins' blood—is as pure as ever."

The younger nobleman drew himself up haughtily, and a fiery flash of pride gleamed in his eye.

"I do not forget, Duke, how illustrious was my great ancestor," he said, in a quivering voice.

"Then be worthy of him." It was a prompt rejoinder, and sent the Earl into hysterics. The Duke saw his advantage. He went on—

"You ask me for the hand of my child, Metropolitana," he said. "You know my conditions. Her social position must be supreme. Useless to talk to me of the army, the bar, the church. I tell you, my boy, that I'll have none of these drivelling professions. If you were to come to me to-morrow as Lord Chancellor I would send you about your business. No. If you would win Metropolitana you must go in for the stage."

"Then you would not even let her accept me as a Field Marshal?" the Earl asked bitterly. "Can you not see that for the stage I lack the necessary culture, influence, intelligence, ambition?"

"Ambition," replied the other contemptuously, "it was to fire you with that that I made you meet me here. Follow me."

He led him to the foot of a colossal bronze statue, of which it was only just possible in this dim light to distinguish the boots, and they told the passer-by that the rest of the noble effigy, towering away a hundred and twenty feet into the clouds above, belonged to the close of the nineteenth century.

"This statue," said the Duke, "is of solid bronze, weighs 700 tons, and bears on its base an inscription penned by him whom it represents. When informed by a few private friends of this little project he wrote what you see there. Read."

The legend was cut in granite in five-foot lettering. The other slowly made it out, and repeated musically word by word. "Happy thought. Something like a cast!"

The two took off their coronets and shook hands in silence for a few moments. They knew the mighty presence in which they stood, and were much moved. The Duke resumed.

"You have read his greatest work," he said, reverentially, "and have studied all the European commentators on the question as to what became of the fourth admiral in *Black-Eyed Susan*?"

"I have," replied the Earl, thoughtfully, "and have long agreed with the best Ojibbeway critics, that, though written for

a leading tragedian of the day, he was cut out at the last rehearsal for reasons that never have transpired."

"He can be restored," whispered the Duke, "without sacrilege to the great author's work." He touched the pedestal with some awe as he spoke. Far above him in the night, the bronze features seemed almost to wear a smile. As those of the sphinx gazed on the desert and waited the answer to a mystery, so did these look at Wimbledon and ask it a conundrum.

It was the Earl's turn to speak. "Do you mean," he asked, breathing quickly, "that that part *might be restored*—for if so, I might be induced—yes—to grapple with it—and—"

"Then you will crown your life—and take, at last, to the boards?" shouted the other quickly.

The Earl bowed his head modestly. An eagle perched itself on the shirt collar of the colossus above. A smile still seemed to play about the bronze features in the dark.

"Metropolitana is yours,—take her, my boy, with all my heart. You have been true to the intelligence of your great ancestor. You touch by this resolve the proudest height in this our artistic England—that of what men once called a *poor player*. But now to supper."

The two noblemen whirled into the air as he spoke, and vanished amid the fashionable domes of Turnham-green.

They had been standing in the dark unconsciously upon a bed of choice pelargoniums.

And where those flowers were now budding, six hundred years ago four cross roads met.

THE PHANTOM OMNIBUS.

By JOHN AUGUSTUS O'SHEA.

OF a verity, the era of the supernatural, like the age of chivalry, is gone. Ghosts and goblins, to use a phrase of modern cant, are "played out"; Highland wraiths and Hibernian leprechauns are things of the past; there are no fairies except those of pantomime—no demon except that of strong drink. The world is growing hard-hearted, matter-of-fact, money-grubbing—a world of "sophisters, economists, and calculators." If Aladdin were given the wonderful lamp now-a-days, his first thought would be to inspect it for the brand-mark of Birmingham manufacture; if Fortunatus were to dip his hand into that inexhaustible purse of his, he would ring every coin to satisfy himself that the good genius had not been trying to palm off worthless counters with the die of St. George and the Dragon and the legend "To Hanover" upon his innocence. To superstition has succeeded scepticism. I am sorry for it, for of the two evils the former is the lesser.

In my opinion (and I have reflected on the subject) the life of populous cities, the march of science, and the spread of cheap newspapers have done much to relegate the spirits to the limbo of the sedan chairs. You can count the haunted houses in any large community on the fingers of one hand; and these uninhabited premises are invariably in Chancery, and the worst possible state of repair. The moment any novelty in the marvellous, such as the execution of a fantasia on the banjo by an unsubstantial performer, or the projection of a spirit photograph in shadowy silhouette is announced, some prying Lynn or Maskelyne starts up to prove the one a conjuror's trick, or chemistry steps in to explain that the other is due to the impregnation of prepared paper with a certain solution. Niebuhr destroys all the romantic chapters of Livy and old Roman historians—and we praise him; Professor Pepper tramples on Thaumaturgia—and we pass him votes of thanks; no ghost is possible, at present, in the British capital, but the ghost of Giles Scroggins—and he is met with only in the regions of comic song. The cheap newspapers laugh at the traditions of lonely villages, and wage war against witchcraft and fortune-telling. Yet most gipsies who read lines on the palm of Sarah Jane, the maid-of-all-work, are quite as infallible as the sporting prophets. We have sheered off from the rocks of Scylla, and now we are treading the whirlpool of Charybdis. From a readiness to believe in everything, we are gradually arriving at a fixed determination to believe in nothing. This is wrong. We should not give up the ghost; and, individually speaking, I protest I never willingly shall. I believe in him as devoutly as ever did Shakespeare, or Sir Walter Scott, or Charles Dickens—up to a certain point; and I humbly submit that if one is adjudged a fool by the multitude, this is a glorious company with which to be linked in joint-stock folly. Moreover, I am proud to say I am tenant of one of the few haunted houses in South Belgravia, in consideration of which the landlord makes me an unsolicited reduction of £6 12s. 6d. a quarter; the longest-haired and most weird-voiced of Banshees is attached to our family (and that in my country is a finer charter of respectability than a coat-of-arms from Herald's College), and I have the privilege of reckoning among my friends, the most thorough of ghost-seers, Benjamin Franklin Crowhurst, than whom in the wilderness of brick known as the Modern Babylon, there is none more discriminating in tippie, more erudite in philology, more artless and conscientious in his reports of dark séances in the leading exponent of Spiritualism published in Southampton Row, and more dashing in his personation of Dick Turpin in the equestrian drama of that name at the Hippodrome in the Westminster Bridge Road.

Two years ago I spent Christmas night in Paris, where Crowhurst was over on a secret mission, dividing his time between the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Cirque de l'Hiver. I am afraid he was writing an original hippodrama. We were a party of four compatriots, who kept the great festival in a home fashion in the foreign land—Crowhurst, Mr. Brockbank, of *Galvani's Messenger*, my brother, and myself. The theatres were in full swing, but we did not go to any theatre. Instead, we dined together, and had as near an approach as Tavernier, of the Palais Royal, could afford to *rosbif* and *plumb-pouder*, and after dinner we adjourned to my hotel, where we tried to make ourselves happy. We smoked, and gossiped, and sipped mulled claret for lack of hot usquebaugh. My brother, who fancies himself on the *cornet-d-piston*, played "Adeste Fideles" and "We may be happy yet," and then we agreed to confiscate the mouthpiece of his instrument. Brockbank, in a round voice, trolled forth a fine old English convivial lay, commencing "A toper's a thorough gamecock." And then it struck me that the glories of Christmas must be indeed departing if I could not furnish a jorum of honest whiskey-punch—none of your insipid *grogs Americains*—to my guests. I sent a deputation for the "materials" to a cellar I knew in the Rue Scribe; we brewed them hot, strong, and not too sweet; we waxed loquacious, epigrammatic, anecdotal, and, finally, to keep Christmas in the orthodox style, we prevailed on Crowhurst to tell us a ghost story, and, with the stereotyped preliminary cough, he thus began:—

"It was in the little village, my lads, at pantomime time. Coburg and Pillsworth, and your humble servant, had been to Drury Lane. You know Coburg? I believe he's editing a paper in Toronto, now, but he was eating his dinners in the Inner

Temple then. As for Tom Pillsworth, of Guy's, I needn't ask you if you recollect him. Well, it was past eleven as we loitered in the hall of the house, discussing the merits of the entertainment, when we came across a friend named Smithers, who beamed upon us like a limelight.

"Ah, Mr. Crowhurst," he said to me, "you are just the man I want. I've got some wine in the bin at my place—it's quite close—that I'd like you to taste. I know you're a connoisseur, but I lay you odds you never kissed this peculiar vintage—"

"Don't throw your money away," I cried. "Do you mean to say you can produce me a liquor unknown to me?"

"I have had the honour of an introduction to most wines," said Pillsworth: "but I have heard a peculiar vintage of Greece spoken of so highly that I own I'd like to make its acquaintance. The few who have tasted it pronounce all other wines to be coloured waters by comparison."

"'Tis that identical wine I mean to give you," said Smithers, "a friend of mine, who returned from the Ionian Islands a few weeks ago, brought me a dozen as a present, and bade me recollect that I had the essence of happiness imprisoned in a bottle."

"All right," said I, "let us have it, by all means."

"We turned in to Smithers' rooms, and he produced the wine. I confess it puzzled me at the time, it had such a singular flavour; but I am positive now it was Nauplia di Malvasia, a wine which the Italians say is 'manna to the mouth, and balsam to the brain'—but they are no judges of good liquor. If you go in for Greek wines, lads, take my advice and drink the vintage of Santorin. Try Bacchus or Calista: Bacchus yellow as gold, translucent as the topaz and bright as the sun; Calista, colourless as the summer moon-beam. At all events we finished the bottle, and Smithers looked rather disappointed when I pronounced his 'essence of happiness' rather a wishy-washy liquid.

"It's not prized so much for its flavour as for its effects," he said, somewhat apologetically, "but I suppose it acts variously on different constitutions. I've been told for a fact that those who are least sensible to its bouquet when drinking are most likely to be influenced afterwards."

"Well," said I, "bouquet or not, I would prefer a pint of Guinness's XX. any day to a dozen of your corked 'essence of happiness.' Thank you all the same, Smithers, for your good intentions. Ta-ta! I must be going."

"What a hurry you're in," cried Pillsworth, catching me by the sleeve. "Don't go away yet. We'll have a bit of supper somewhere in the neighbourhood."

"Can't stay," said I firmly. "I've a hard day's work before me to-morrow, and must get a sound sleep to clear my head. Good night."

"As I spoke I slipped from Pillsworth's grasp, and darted away, pursued by laughter, and a sarcastic suggestion to 'Take care of myself.' Arrived at Charing Cross as the clock—emphasized by Big Ben—pointed to twelve, I saw an omnibus starting which would land me close to my domicile. Feeling lazy, I made up my mind to give my legs a rest, and treat myself to a two-penny ride inside. I jumped in, and immediately the horses started. Indolently I threw myself on the cushions at the end farthest from the door, having no compunctions about indulging in a loll, seeing that I had the whole 'bus to myself. After a few seconds I took out a cigar, believing I could manage to snatch a surreptitious smoke. Striking a match, I was surprised by a change in everything around me. Looking more observantly, I noticed what a marked difference there was in the interior of this omnibus and of those I had been used to. The seats were wide and softly cushioned, the roof high and arched; a most refreshing current sweetened the air; a lamp, pendant from the centre of the roof and filled with oil of a deep ruby colour, swung slowly to and fro, shedding with each movement delicate fragrance and mellowed light. The motion of the vehicle, too, was noiseless, as if the wheels were tired with india-rubber, and resembled the gliding of a sleigh over velvety snow more than the jerking jog of an omnibus.

"Cranley Gardens, please, conductor."

"Absorbed in contemplating such an advance in cheap locomotion, I did not notice the presence of another passenger until the above words coming from a corner nearest the door made me aware of the fact that, after all, I was not alone, and put an effectual veto on my promised smoke. The peculiarity of the coloured radiance falling from the swinging lamp hindered me from clearly distinguishing the features and person of the speaker, but as far as I could guess from what I did see, and also from the intonation of voice, I conjectured that my fellow traveller must be a woman and young."

"I am not in the habit of taking much interest in casual fellow-passengers, particularly in a 'bus; but then I have generally been with crowds, and a crowd weakens and divides the attention, while an individual has the power to concentrate it, and, if the individual be a woman and young, almost provokes the exercise of the power—at least, in my case. I felt the more curious about my companion as her destination and mine were the same, for I, too, meant to alight at Cranley Gardens. I amused myself by fancying all sorts of things about her, her antecedents, her social position, her personal appearance, her temperament. In a trice, by some process of magnetic affinity, I found myself seated directly opposite her, peering eagerly across the shifting rays of light, in the faint hope of catching a glimpse of her face. But even when the light streamed directly upon her, it bathed her in a roseate haze, through which I could only discern a pair of luminous eyes shining softly out at me. A moment's pause ensued, during which I could hear a low, regular breathing, followed by a slight rustling sound; then a voice, liquid and full, a voice rich with sweetness and intelligence, poured in silvery trickle from the midst of the semi-obscurity.

"Why so curious? Why seek to know further of me, bringing me to the level of the every-day world of commonplace cares and vulgar ambitions? Why?"

"So astounded was I at my fair companion's intuitive perception of my secret thoughts that I could barely stammer an attempt at a reply.

"I beg your pardon," I said, hurriedly. "I—I—"

"Have you lived so short a time," she continued, "as not to be aware that it is the fleeting, the intangible, the unknown, whose charm alone is ever new, ever enduring?"

"Forgive me," I answered, emboldened as she proceeded; "forgive me for differing from you, but the stable and lasting have infinitely more charms for me."

"My fellow traveller laughed a low, musical laugh, and, bending towards me, laid her fingers lightly on my wrist, her touch sending a strange thrill through my frame.

"The stable and lasting!" she echoed. "And where are you to find the stable and lasting? In the friendship of man—in the heart of woman? In gold, or fame, or life, or in the morning after life? Where?"

"Resting her fingers still on my wrist, she was waiting my reply, when the 'bus suddenly stayed its course. The conductor opened the door, pushed the slouched hat which concealed his features back from his forehead, and, raising a bull's-eye lantern looked in at me inquiringly; such a gnome-like face as the man

had! I could only compare it to a sheet of vellum, originally crossed by fine lines, and now warped by age or exposure.

“House of Correction?” he asked, in a voice that sounded hollow and faint, as if it came from a distance.

“I did not answer immediately, so he raised his lantern higher, as if to attract my attention, and repeated his question. Then he moved aside, as if to give me room to pass, and I saw the shadow of the high walls looming behind him. Shaking my head in the negative the ‘bus went on again rapidly; the conductor lowered his lantern and turned away.

“What a queer face,” I said, in a half whisper to my fair *vis-à-vis*. “It puts me in mind of the portraits of Voltaire.”

“Voltaire!” she echoed. “Oh, no! I cannot trace the slightest resemblance. This man’s face owes its peculiarity to outward influences—Voltaire’s to inward. Oh, no! not all,” she continued, “I do not see it—and I knew Voltaire well. There is a wide difference between the stamp of genius and the effects of weather,” she concluded, with a little ripple of laughter.

“How figuratively she spoke; one would think she was personally acquainted with the bitter old cynic, instead of merely knowing him through his works, his portraits, or his busts by Houdon.

“You are prejudiced against Voltaire,” she resumed, “because you look at him in one of his aspects. The lapidary does not throw away the diamond because one of its facets is not polished to his taste. He was sceptic, mocker, and millinery court poet, as your Carlyle calls him; yet even Carlyle is forced to admit that, because he seemed the wisest and best, he could drag mankind at his chariot-wheels.”

“I own I was taken aback at hearing so young and comely a damsel quote ‘Sartor Resartus,’ as if she had learned the book by rote.

“Carlyle is wrong,” she added, “Voltaire did not seem the wisest and best; he was, from his countenance.”

“Ah!” said I, in a gallant tone, “your perceptions are so delicate, so swift, that you read a physiognomy much more quickly than we men.”

“Shall I read yours, then?” she softly murmured, lifting the fingers that were on my wrist, and moving them along my arm until they rested on my shoulder.

“If you can,” I answered, smilingly; “you will scarcely be able to distinguish it in this light.”

“The lamp flickers so,” she continued in the same soft tone as before. “I will touch the features, and guess at the expression.”

“While her right hand leaned on my shoulder, the fingers of her left commenced to stray gently over my face, which, with amused complaisance, I gave up to her manipulation.

“Well?” I asked, as she paused an instant.

“She made no reply, and immediately her fingers began again their caressing motion, lingering soothingly on my hair, my eyes, my lips. Bewildered by the action of my strange companion, I yielded to it, while beneath the influence of her subtle touch I felt myself succumbing to some influence more potent than my own will.

“Surely,” I gasped, “surely you are not trying to mesmerize me?”

“Again no reply. Still those supple fingers, charged with electricity, continued their play over my countenance. Closer and closer drew my companion’s head to mine, and by the dim light I could discern a kind of struggle taking place within the eye whose regard was fixed upon me. Gradually the misty shadow shifted itself from before her face. The beauty of this face made me feel as if I would fain hold in my breath, lest the faintest sound might chase away or mar the charm of its expression. At once tenderly spiritual in cast and yet vividly human in the quick mobility of feature, soul and passion strove for mastery, the one with the other, in the changes that came and went over the mystic loveliness of the portrait before me. Fascinated, I gazed at this strange being without either power or inclination to stir, speak, or move my eyes from her. Closer and closer the face drew to me, until at length, for one moment—one fleeting moment—a pair of humid lips rested on mine; then, letting her hands slowly drop, she drew quickly away from me, and the shadow of the lamp fell once more completely over her. I was no longer capable of reasoning on what was passing, or had already passed: I was only supremely, intensely conscious of being happy!

“Tell me that we shall meet again. Tell me that this journey is but a prelude to a long acquaintance. Tell me that—”

“Hush!” she interrupted, as she quickly disengaged her hand from my grasp. “Hush you do not know what you ask.”

“I do well know what I ask,” persisted I, “I wish to meet you again, to know more of you.”

“Again she laid her fingers on my wrist—again that strange thrill quivered through my frame. A short silence ensued, during which I could count the beating of her heart.

“Why seek to break the spell?” she said at last, in a light tone. “Let me be your spirit-love. Let me be to you as a memory, as the intangible ideal vainly longed after by all men in their exalted hours. Some day, perhaps, when, having lavished all your hopes on another woman, you find her only common clay, you can think of me; then it will soothe you to remember that I, at least, have given you illusions, and not destroyed them.”

“I am too human, too hungrily human, to be fed on such shadows,” I passionately cried.

“Think,” she continued, her voice growing softer as she proceeded, “of the advantage I shall have over all other beings who may enter into your life. You will always picture me to yourself as I am now—always young, always fair, always sympathetic. Time, which will make all else grow wearisome, will only deepen my influence, for I shall be to you even unto the end the ever-desired and the never-attained.”

“She ceased speaking, and her words but roused a stronger desire in me to know more of her. The very effort she made to shake me off only excited me and drew me on. I was about making a passionate protest against such a summary and unsatisfactory close to our acquaintanceship, when a warning ‘Hush!’ arrested the words on my lips.

“‘Cranley Gardens,’ muttered the conductor, as the omnibus came to a full stop. ‘Cranley Gardens,’ he repeated, the sound of his voice scattering to the winds a thousand dazzling dreams, and waking me to the fact that I was at my journey’s end.

“Well, what of that? We could continue our conversation when the vehicle had gone on its course, for she also must get down at Cranley Gardens. I jumped hastily out, with the intention of proffering the aid of my arm to help the descent of my fellow-traveller. In my eagerness I stumbled, but quickly recovering, I turned, a smile on my face, and—

“What? Where? How?”

“I rubbed my eyes desperately—shut them—opened them again, and stared round me in crazed bewilderment.

“Where was the omnibus? Where the vellum-faced conductor? Where my fair companion with the humid lips and luminous eyes?”

“I stood alone, quite alone in the middle of the road. Omnibus, conductor, fellow-traveller—all had vanished like a

dream; I looked up, I looked down—I saw nothing of them. In vain I gazed around. In my despair, I appealed for information to a solitary caddy on the rank, who was rubbing down his horse with a wisp of hay, in evident expectation of a nocturnal fare.

“I know nothing of ‘busses,’ he ungraciously replied, ‘taint in my line.’

“I could have cursed that caddy, as he stood spitefully grinning beneath the lamp-post, the trees waving darkly in the background. I could have cursed him, but I hadn’t time to waste on him. I must husband breath and energy to pursue my search. I know not how many hours I roamed hither and thither in the neighbourhood. Wearied and despairing, at moments a step, a sound close by was sufficient to revive my spirits, and start me afresh on my search. She must be somewhere near. She could not have meant to go away without bidding me ‘good night.’ I should surely see her again. Thus reasoning, at length, tired and footsore, I bent my steps towards my rooms determined as soon as I should be refreshed by a night’s repose to continue my pursuit.

“Late the next morning, as I sat musing over a cup of chocolate, my solitude was broken in upon by Coburg and Pillsworth.

“I say, old fellow, you do look seedy,” said the latter.

“Good heavens! do those people mean to poison me?” I exclaimed, intentionally evading a direct reply, as I pushed the chocolate from me with a gesture of disgust.

“Pillsworth whistled.

“At what hour did you get home last night?” asked Coburg.

“Keep your cross-examination for your clients, will you?” I rather savagely retorted, glaring at him as bitterly as if by the remotest possibility an *arrière pensée* could lurk beneath a question of his.

“Coburg opened his eyes wide, and burst into laughter, and his good-tempered gaiety was so infectious that I couldn’t help, after a struggle, joining in it.

“I related my adventure of the previous night to my friends, making a clean breast of it, with one reservation. One, and one only. I could not brook to hear the involuntary and poetic caress of my fellow-traveller commented on by my comrades. How I winced inwardly at the thought of such a profanation! how I pictured to myself the coarsely jocular comment Pillsworth would be sure to salute it with, the narrow prudish manner in which Coburg would regard it.

“Why, what a gem of a conductor to carry you for nothing!” said Coburg, as I finished.

“You want a sedative, my boy,” said Pillsworth. “That Grecian wine you despised so much at the time—”

“That’s it!” interrupted Coburg; “it was the after effects Smithers spoke of, combined with the witching hour.”

“You don’t mean to insinuate,” I impatiently exclaimed, “that what I have related to you has not happened?”

“My dear fellow,” mildly interposed Pillsworth, “we have not the slightest doubt of your veracity; but, at the same time, you must admit how very apt you are to fling a romantic halo around an everyday occurrence. As to the woman—”

“Woman! How I hate that word!”

“Well, person—young lady—being—whatever you will,” he continued, with a smile. “It is my opinion that if you met her to-day, you would be greatly disappointed.

“Come, come,” said Pillsworth, laying his hand on my shoulder, “don’t be vexed for such a trifle. Suppose we three meet to-night before twelve at Charing-cross and try to find your vellum-faced conductor?”

“Agreed!” I eagerly replied, mollified by this concession, and vaguely hoping that, through the conductor, I might hear something of my fellow-traveller.

Here Crowhurst paused and drew a long breath. His eyes had a wild sparkle, and two big scarlet disks burned on his cheeks. In the intensity of his emotion—for he not only told his story but acted it—he had excited himself to exhaustion. To give him an opportunity of repose, I suggested that we should replenish the bowl of punch. “Yes, and while you’re brewing it,” chimed in my brother, “Brookbank will give us a song.” “Nonsense, Bob,” said Brookbank, “I have given you one already, besides we want to hear the sequel of Mr. Crowhurst’s story.” “I prefer that you should sing,” said Crowhurst. “The truth is I am somewhat fatigued.” “If you don’t,” threatened my brother, “I swear I’ll attempt one of Wagner’s overtures on the cornet without the mouthpiece.” “Sooner than submit to that infliction I sacrifice myself,” and in a voice of plaintive prettiness Brookbank began the tenderest barcarole to which oars ever dipped:—

Sul mare Lucia
L’astro d’argento,
Placida è l’onda
Prospero il vento.

And as he repeated the chorus we all joined as best we could in the long-cadenced, most musical Santa Lucia. “Very good song and very well sung,” cried my brother, “and now, Mr. Crowhurst, with your permission, we’re all attention.” Thus pressed, Crowhurst resumed his narrative.

“It was midnight; and for the last twenty minutes we three had been vainly watching opposite Charing-cross.

“It is strange,” remarked Pillsworth, “how we are kept waiting. I had better ask the policeman if any accident has happened. Policeman,” he said, addressing the man who stood at the corner, “when will the ‘bus for Cranley Gardens turn up?”

“There are no more ‘busses to-night, sir,” said the policeman.

“Has there been any change in the arrangements recently?” again queried Pillsworth.

“Oh, dear! no, sir, not at all,” answered the man. “The ‘busses never run so late as this. The last one left a long time before you came up.”

“Pillsworth whistled a prolonged whistle: Coburg burst into an uncontrollable guffaw, and said something about ‘after effects.’

“You mean to tell me, policeman,” I exclaimed excitedly, “that an omnibus did not start for South Kensington from this corner at twelve o’clock last night?”

“The policeman looked into my flushed face so menacingly close to him, shrugged his shoulders with a gesture of compassion, and then folded his arms with official dignity.

“Sir,” said he, in a even tone—“Sir, the last ‘bus for Cranley Gardens starts at five minutes past eleven precisely,”—and then turning to my friends, he added, in pity—“I advise you to take him home in a four-wheeler, gen’lmen.”

The following evening Mr. Brockbank, my brother, and I, met at dinner, and conversation turned on the tale of the Phantom Omnibus. I was anxious to know what my companions thought of it, and asked them to give me their opinions candidly.

“Well,” said my brother—he is candid, “all I can say is that your friend has mistaken his avocation. The sooner he gives up philology and the circus, and turns his abilities to romance writing the better for his pecuniary prospects. He would be a mine of wealth to the *Penny Aulful*.”

“Steady, Bob,” said Brockbank. “You are wrong to accuse

any man lightly of imposing on your confidence. Recollect what Imogen says ‘Our very eyes are sometimes like our judgments, blind.’”

“Benjamin Franklin Crowhurst is like the late George Washington,” I said. “He is incapable of telling a lie.”

“Do you ask us to believe that he believes in that yarn he spun us?” exclaimed my brother.

“Undoubtedly.”

Perhaps I should add that I found a phial of hydrate of chloral in the room where we held our symposium on Christmas night. It certainly did not belong to me, and the *garçon* assures me it was not in the place before my guests arrived.

A HOLIDAY ON A HIRELING.

By “BAGATELLE,”

Author of “Sporting Sketches at Home and Abroad.”

“WELL, it is a rum ‘un and no mistake!” The speaker was my old friend, James Holton, and the subject of his discourse a horse that had been brought over for my inspection. I had gone down to stay with him for Christmas, and as the hounds met handy on the next morning, i.e., the 24th, he had volunteered to find me a mount.

He only kept two nags himself, and one having unfortunately gone lame, he was forced to send over to Hinchley to a jobbing dealer; and the result of his inquiries stood before us. A great, raw-boned chesnut, half-clipped, half-fed, and wholly vicious-looking, standing about 16 hands 2in, and from his thinness and poverty appearing much higher, caused the exclamation that commences this anecdote, and James was right. It was the rummiest-looking beast I ever saw.

“What does he do?” said I to the dealer.

“Most hanythink,” replied the man. “E’s good all round—ayther saddle or ‘arness.”

“Jumps?” I asked.

“Mr. ‘Olton sends hover to say as ‘ow he wants a ‘unter for a friend, and what’s the use of a ‘unter as won’t jump? It ain’t likely as I should a brought ‘im if he couldn’t lep; he *can* jump, I can tell yer,” rejoined the dealer with lofty condescension, and the air of a man whose word is not to be doubted.

After some haggling, finding we could get nothing else, the chesnut was at last taken for the day at thirty shillings, and was to be at Holton’s door by nine o’clock. Punctually to time he arrived, looking somewhat better as to his coat than he did the previous day, but his personal beauty not improved by reason of a sheepskin door-mat which reposed between the saddle and his back.

“Here, I can’t go out on that thing,” I said. “I’m not going to play the part of a gay muleteer with saddle-bags and sheepskins.”

“Beg parding, sir, but e’s got a little bit of a sore back, and master thought as ‘ow the saddle might nip ‘im,” volunteered the groom of the fiery steed.

Happily I found the sore back a myth, and that the sheepskin was meant to play the part of stuffing to the saddle, of which there was next to none. We soon had one of Holton’s on him, with a leather saddle-cloth underneath, and, breakfast over, we made a start for Langdale Park. The first thing the hireling did was to shy right across the road at nothing, and when I laid my crop down on his shoulder, up went his head straight in the air, and down the road he ran (it was nothing else but a run), with neck stretched out straight, for all the world like a goose. In about a hundred yards I managed to pull him up, and extemporised a ring martingale with a piece of string and the loan of James’s key-ring.

“Come along, we shall be late; let’s canter on,” said my friend, after another mile, and accordingly off we went. My heavens! such a performance as the chesnut’s canter. Legs, head, and tail all hard at work, and a cheerful musical accompaniment to cap it.

“Blows a bit. I should call him Christmas Carol,” remarked James, with a laugh.

“Better call the brute The Waits,” said I, “he’s musical enough, and we shall have to wait a thundering long time before we get to the meet.”

However, there is an end to everything, and at last we arrived just as they were moving off. A look at the hounds seemed to excite my noble quadruped, for he indulged in two or three vicious kicks at the nearest horse, and wanted to try another spin *à la* goose. Unluckily for me this took place as we were passing the wall of the village school, and when I restrained his ardour, and gave him both spurs, he cast one eye back at me, quite deliberately, and said, as plain as a horse could say, “All right, my boy; see that wall? Here goes!” and in another minute I found my right leg being rubbed against it. Finding that no use, he put his tail against the wall, and attempted to crush me by rearing. Nothing I could do, either by the *suaviter in modo* or the *fortiter in re*, would induce him to move, and if it had not been for the timely interference of a yokel with some lighted straw I should be there now, a fearful example of misplaced confidence. As I rejoined the field somewhat disconcerted, I heard two or three men say to James, “Does that horse your friend’s on belong to Davis, the dealer, at Hinchley?” and on his replying in the affirmative, “Well, then, tell him not to try and fence with the brute, unless he wants to break his neck.”

Pleasant, thought I; here’s thirty shillings’ worth of culpable homicide on Mr. Davis’s part. I’ll just try over this small fence though, as a nice little one, quite plain, with no ditch on either side, met my view; and to my surprise, as well as every-body else’s he hopped over like a bird, vile deceiver that he was. No sooner were the hounds thrown into cover, than “Tally ho! gone away! g-o-o-n-e a-w-a-y!” rose from the bottom end, and away we all pounded down the hill to a nice little brook at the bottom, the chesnut tearing away and singing, “Who will o’er the downs,” or some other ditty, at the top of his voice.

“Mind the water!” shouted one or two as they came alongside. “All right, his ears are forward; he means having it,” I hallooed in return. Did he? Up to the bank he rattled full split, and then out went both forelegs; a dead stop; over his head I shot bang into the middle, and the bank giving way, Mr. Davis’s steed also found himself taking a mud bath. Once there, nothing would induce him to stir, though the water did not come up to his belly. After trying every means I could think of to get him out, aided by some farm labourers, I took the saddle off and left him to his fate, not feeling inclined to pay for cart-horses and ropes. Luckily I found a trap going towards Holton’s place, and getting in, I arrived dripping wet and cruelly cold in about an hour’s time. The brute, I heard afterwards, came out and finished his song when he thought the coast was clear, and was promptly incarcerated in the pound—a proceeding which cost Mr. Davis the sum of 10s. All the same, I shall never forget my mount on his chesnut, and I think you will agree with me, that

“It is better to run on thine own understandings
Than to exalt thyself on a dealer’s crew.”



A CHRISTMAS DREAM.

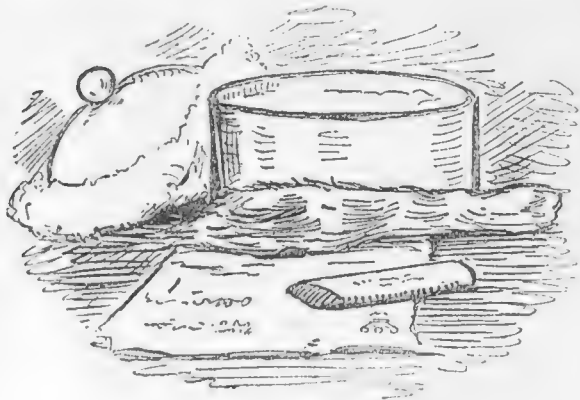


SLEEPING BEAUTY.

THE HISTORY OF A HARE'S-FOOT.

BY OUR CAPTIOUS CRITIC.

WHEN one sees a hare's-foot dabbed and smeared with raddle and rouge on the table of a theatrical dressing-room, it seldom crosses the mind at such a time that the little foot, now pressed into the service of the profession which shines under lime-light and gas, once helped to carry its original owner through many a fresh sylvan scene by the woodside, or through the furrows of the corn field, making rare sport in the moonlight or at the gentle glow of dawn, touching no other substance but the fresh earth and the dewy grass. It seems strange to say so—but take it for what it may be worth—that the sweet innocence of Puss in early life, ere the crack of a well-aimed gun became her



death knell, might remain strong and fresh in the foot severed for the use of some fair actress, and affect that lady's disposition, even in the light-hearted surroundings of the Volatility Theatre. There are more things in animal magnetism than are dreamt of in your philosophy. I do not know whether what I have to tell is one of them, but hear it.

Kate Curlie was a good, innocent, and true little parcel of humanity, and she dearly loved her accepted sweetheart, Jack Brown. He was one of those unfortunate individuals who, when plodding at a desk, the depths of which may eventually turn out a gold mine, or at the very smallest calculation will always represent a comfortable competency, suddenly have a vision of glory as bright and as strong as the one that flashed on Joan of Arc, and, throwing down the pen of commerce, shout, "I will drudge no more; literary laurels await me. I will win them!" When this mental derangement fell upon Jack he was engaged to Kate; of course, it upset many of their little plans, but what was that to the glories of fame and fortune, which Jack would win in "a twinkling"? A twinkling is a very elastic term, especially when publishers and dull-brained editors are the twinklers; and poor Jack wasted a good deal of ink and paper, and mental and nervous tissue, all to no purpose. That provoking personage, Fate, who never does anything by halves, was pleased to strike down Kate's revered father just at this juncture, so poor little Miss Kate, who in the ordinary humdrum course of commercial life would by this have been married to Jack, in very moderate but very comfortable circumstances, has to look about for a livelihood. Poor Jack



LITTLE KATE CURLIE.

was in distraction at the turn events had taken; Kate gazed at it with that sweet way of receiving the inevitable which belongs to unmarried members of the softer sex when they are endowed with an object to love. "Go into business! No! Jack would not hear of it; develop her splendid powers as an actress, and one day he would write a play that would make both their fames and fortunes." And of course, you know, she would live happily for ever. After much vexation of spirit at stage doors, and in agents' offices, an engagement was procured at the Volatility Theatre; and Kate, accompanied by faithful Jack, went and came from her professional duties every night of the week but Sunday, when they would walk or sit and talk of the prospects of fame and glory, all of which conversation was lit up with the rosy halo of love.

The Volatility Theatre was, though very successful and popular with the theatre-going people, chiefly under the patronage of Lord Ballygurly. Lord Ballygurly was an Irish peer who attended more to the serious duties of the side-wing and green-room than to his "esteets" in that most neglected and verdant of islands, Quid Ireland. As he said himself, "He would a

deal rather shoot than be shot at;" and on this account he had a convenient estate in England when it suited him to revive his old system by rusticity. Little Kate Curlie (or Curly Kate as she was called as in the theatre) became quite a success. Her piquant little style of rattling through a burlesque part made her very popular, and the light of Lord Ballygurly's countenance fell upon her, and she was "Egad, very pretty," in his lordship's eyes; and he began to think how many Baronesses of his acquaintance looked the part much worse than Kate would do. Of course, Charlie Crutch and Harry Toothpick, and Sir Guy Eyeglasse, and Captain Pumps, and little Billy Gibus were all in the wake of his Lordship, and, of course, Kate got more bouquets and presents of one sort or another than she well knew what to do with. Jack used to have things sent to him, too, but they were generally bundles of paper covered with his own handwriting, and marked, "declined with thanks." Kate loved him as much as ever, she knew that, with all these gilded surroundings. She always had Jack nearest her heart; and the faithful fellow, who wouldn't take any help from her, nobly plodded to and from the theatre with her. "Wasn't he good," thought Kate; "but what a pity he cannot afford proper boots and a new coat." It was so provoking to have the fellows who came in purple and fine linen, merely to have the felicity of raising their hats to her, smile, staring at him—poor Jack! She pitied him greatly. But the boots got worse, so did the coat, and so did the weather, until Kate felt constrained to ask the dear fellow not to come unless it was fine—she could easily come and go by herself in a cab when it was wet. One night after little Billy Gibus (who was a wag) asked her if Jack was her valet or her butler, she felt the condition of those boots, and that coat, and the weather most acutely. After that she told Jack that he must not come at all, for it was interfering with his work and his health. He consented, and looked on Sunday as his reward of a week's hard work, for other days Kate was so occupied with the matters



LORD BALLYGURLY.

of the theatre that it was impossible to see her; and, indeed, the Sabbath soon became a rare and occasional luxury, for a drive in the country was absolutely necessary for Kate's health, and as Jack could not afford to bring her, he would never be so selfish as to debar her the pleasure offered by some of her many kind friends and admirers. He would work and wait, and when fortune smiled, and he had won that wreath of laurels (it seemed a very withered collection of vegetables now, compared with the bright crisp ornament of his first vision), he would take Kate and marry her. Fortune did give a little smirk at him in the shape of a regular engagement on a paper of high standing. He thought, I will go down to the Volatility and give Kate a joyful surprise. Down he went, just when the people were leaving the theatre; he stood in the shadow behind the little knot of gaping, well-dressed men, waiting to pounce upon her with his tale of fortune. A brougham with a high-stepping horse drew up, the footman jumped down and threw open the door; Kate came out on the arm of Lord Ballygurly. They entered the brougham, and before Jack had recovered himself they were being whirled off at a round trot. As soon as he realised it all, he tore after the carriage. He would see what it all meant; his determination and fears gave him the swiftness of a greyhound, and he reached the carriage, but the distance was greater than his strength, and he began to falter. What right had he, after all, to interfere with her? So he stumbled home like a drunken man, and laying his head upon his papers, began to blot and blear the work of many anxious hours with his tears.

Lord Ballygurly went down to his "little place in the shires" for some shooting. He was a crack shot, though old of arm and eye. One day two hares, who loved each other very much, were sitting in sweet contentment, and peace, and innocence in the midst of pastoral enjoyment; Lord Ballygurly bowled them both over by letting fly both barrels, one after the other. "Double event! 'Gad, they're worthy of Kate. I'll send 'em to her," he said, as the gamekeeper held them up. They were sent; and one of those rude persons, a railway porter, said to another, as he looked at the label, "Blest if the hold Geezer hain't at it again; 'ere's another of 'em, a party by the name of Curlie, at the hold shop, though." Kate was delighted with the "poor little things," and asked her landlady to save one of the silky feet for her to use at the theatre. That little foot saved her. She felt that there was some charm about it when she passed it over her face nightly. She thought of her love for Jack, how

cruelly she had treated him. She would think those feelings silly and stupid during the day, and determine to fight them down; what rows of admirers she had; and then again, when the foot of the murdered little sylvan lover passed over her face she would think of poor Jack, how good he was, what pleasant times they used to have; and then a note or a bouquet, or some trinket, would arrive, and she would crush the missive without opening it, and stamp her foot in very hate of the man who sent it. Oh, how she felt she detested Toothpick, and Crutch, and Gibus, and the rest of them. As for Lord Ballygurly (he had asked her to call him "Billy") she began to detest him so much that she could not bear the thought of being in his theatre. She sought a fresh engagement, and quickly got one, though not of the rosy and gilded nature of the Volatility, for the manager of the St. Anthony Theatre was a man who did not tolerate hangers on. Her love and remorse about Jack



JACK.

became constant and intense. At last she could bear it no longer, and she wrote to one of the many publishing offices with which his name was now frequently mentioned in reviews and paragraphs. She told him all her remorse, all her love, and all her resolutions. She prayed forgiveness. He came to see her quickly, and she dropped on her knees before him; he raised her to his breast, and her happiness found vent in tears. She muttered little self-recriminations about her past unkindness. How foolish she was to have been dazzled by such false metal—gilt though it was—as Lord Ballygurly. Better honest Jack with a heart full of love than an empty title joined to an empty head and a false heart. She saw it all now, and as she sobbed it out, Jack comforted her. By-and-bye he told her that Fortune was smiling very blandly. The name of Brown was becoming known, and had its price in the market; they would get married, and—and he had given up the notion of writing that play, and he thought she had better give up the stage. She was only too delighted; all feeling of ambition was now centred in loving Jack. When her engagement terminated she sorted out little professional knick-knacks to give her stage friends—little odds and ends that are useful in the



dressing-room and on the stage. Amongst these, a beautiful dressing-case, fitted with every requirement of making-up, everything but a hare's-foot; she had a strong, strange sentiment about that, and as she held it in her hand, or pressed the little brush to her cheek, her thoughts of Jack and her love for him came pure, and soft, and sweet as when her first fresh girl love went out towards him. She gave the make-up box away—but she kept that hare's-foot. It was her talisman.

Jack and Kate soon got married, and cosily settled in the little home he had prepared. There he would work in the enjoyment of success, and the solicitous love of his little wife. One evening she came to him—it was his birthday—and said she wanted to give him something. It was a paper-knife; on the ivory blade were engraved two hearts joined to each other. The handle was a hare's-foot. She kissed him, and told him the story of her talisman. He told it to me.

MARRIAGE A LA MODE.

By Sir Charles L. Young, Bart.

The Countess Speaks.

Good night. You will come and see me some day for a quiet talk?
Oh! thanks; good night. Go with you soon for a morning walk in the Row? I shall be delighted. Good night. I'll bear it in mind.
Hurlingham, Saturday next. Your stalls? Oh—you're much too kind.
At home on Mondays? Of course I'll call. To-morrow five o'clock tea—
If I can; good night. Your drag, Lord John, on Tuesday? Well—I'll see
If I can manage it—thanks; good night. You are good to say you've passed
A pleasant evening—thanks; good night.—Thank Heaven! Over at last!
Where is his Lordship, Jackson? To the Club you think he has gone?
Very well; put out the lamps—put out all, except this one Here in the boudoir. Tell my maid that she can go to bed. You need not wait for his Lordship—I will sit up instead.
Well, I have properly played my part—fulfilled Society's code,
Obeyed the lightest and heaviest laws of marriage à la mode; Even the women cordially said that I was splendidly dressed, Honoured the family diamonds, and looked my very best.

All the men crowded around me, on my words and looks intent; Ogled, belauded, flattered, fooled to the top of my bent! These are the triumphs for which we live, the end for which we were born,
Forgetting that on the brilliant night there waits the dullness of morn.
Yet, wherefore should I complain? Have I not got everything That we girls were taught to expect would come with the wedding-ring?
A title two centuries old—an unencumbered estate— A house in town—all wealth can buy—mine is a splendid fate!
And the women who were girls with me envy me for my lot, They think that all that's fair in life is that which I have got; And yet there are some that I know who wear a brighter gem, For they married the men they loved—Ah! how I envy them!
My Lord is a thorough gentleman, my Lord is noble and kind, Aristocratic features, a well-trained, classical mind. All that befits a peer of the realm, he will do, and has done. He will be Prime Minister, doubtless; but my Lord has a heart of stone!
And of all this I should be glad—proud that he's chosen me To sit at the head of his table—proud his Countess to be; Proud to know that amongst the highest I have a right to move; But it is not enough, my Lord! A woman must have love!
Oh, why do they teach us in youth the lessons we must unlearn, When in practical, cold experience the sad truth we discern? Ah, it is well that over the morn of life some radiance beams— It is well that sorrow knows sleep, and finds peace in beautiful dreams!
For so the desolate heart finds refuge awhile from despair, Escapes from its golden-barred prison, and breathes a freer air— Tears off the silks and satins, and glittering diamond stars, And forgets for a time the history written in ruddy scars.

And the young fond soul is afloat again on the summer sea, Unmindful of the persuasions that sold her divinity! And the sails are spread to the breeze that waits to some sunlit scene,
And becomes a bright reality that sweet *what might have been!*
Folly! What thoughts are here! Vain, wandering fancies, cease!
My lot is cast! My lot is cast! What have I to do with peace! In calm obedience to duty stern, I, the Countess must move, Culling what pleasures are there—I have nothing to do with love!
And yet *he* was here to-night, sorrowful, stately, cold, Nothing in word or look the tale of the past re-told; And I know he is sitting now in his lonely room at home, And I hear his passionate cry—Come back, my lost love—come!
Did God make man and woman for this? Is His dower all in vain,
That we clasp His wonderful gift, and find it only pain? The brighter the sun the deeper the shade, and the days go wandering on,
Bright noon when *he* is by, darkness when *he* is gone!
Silence! It's all my fault—my fault—and only mine! I saw the weary wedding draw near—I saw, and made no sign.
Congratulations and gaudy presents flocked in; but I stood still: "Wilt thou have this man for thy husband?" I said to the Priest, "I will!"
And the union was blessed in the name of God! Oh, God! that these things can be!
That Thou shouldst be so bitterly mocked, for all is open to Thee!
Thou knowest the deep despair, the lie, the bitter pain! Hush! a footstep! my Lord has returned. I am the Countess again!

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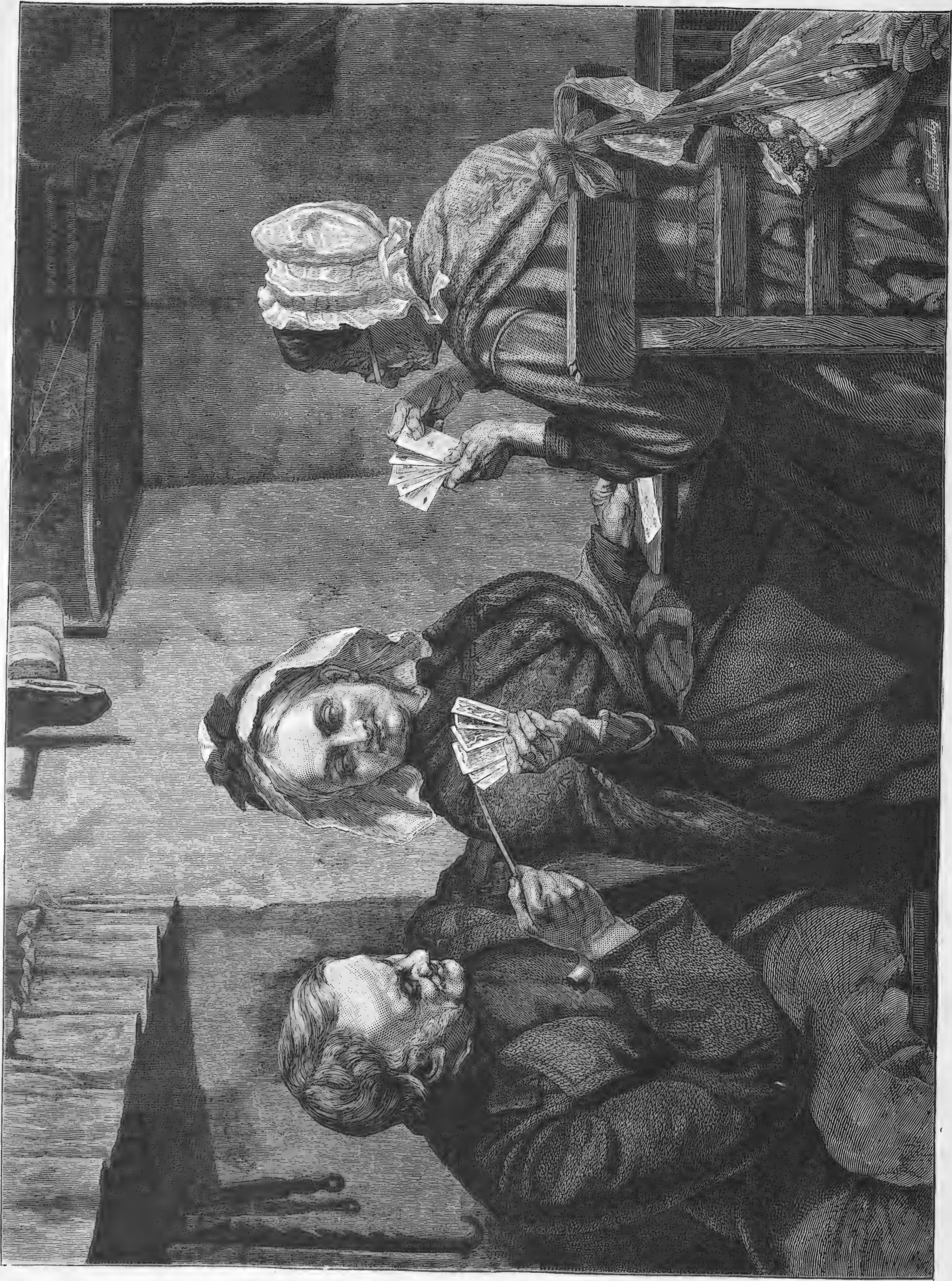
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Original Sum Assured.	Amount Paid.	Premiums Paid.		Original Sum Assured.	Amount Payable.	Premiums Paid.		
£1000	£2970	£1567		£3000	£7430	£4018		
200	594	287		2500	6108	3088		
3000	7160	1988		300	721	336		
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The amounts payable under the above "Policies in force" will increase with each additional year of their subsistence.

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Established during the Reign of George II.
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**STANDARD SCREWED
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And see that they are stamped on
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WARRANTED STANDARD SCREW.

Remember that the

**STANDARD SCREWED
BOOTS & SHOES**

Are different from all others.



The fastening being turned or screwed into the sole, as shown above, thus drawing the outer sole, upper, and inner sole close together, and holding them so they cannot get apart.

No holes are made in the soles by the Standard Screw; this causes the Screw to form a perfect thread in the leather while entering the sole.

The Standard Screw is the only absolute fastening for boots and shoes.

The Standard Screwed Boots are perfectly watertight.



ASK FOR THE

Standard Screwed Boots and Shoes,

and see that they are stamped on the soles.

By ALL BOOT AND SHOE DEALERS
THROUGHOUT THE UNITED KINGDOM.

THE

NUBIAN BLACKING

IS BEST FOR BOOTS AND SHOES.

**THE NUBIAN BLACKING**

NO BRUSHES REQUIRED WITH

THE NUBIAN BLACKING

Is perfectly waterproof.

THE NUBIAN BLACKING

Will not rub off or soil ladies' skirts.

**THE NUBIAN BLACKING**

Need only be applied once a week.

THE NUBIAN BLACKING

Gives a polish equal to patent leather.

THE NUBIAN BLACKING

Will not crack.

**THE NUBIAN BLACKING**

Will polish belts, travelling bags, harness, and all leather goods.

THE NUBIAN BLACKING

Keeps the leather soft and pliable.

THE NUBIAN BLACKING

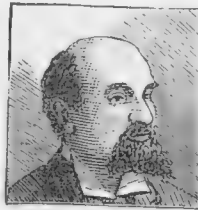
Is free from acid, which abounds more or less in all other blackings.

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BALDNESS IS CURABLE.

BEFORE USING.



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"EAU MALLERON."

A CURE IS GUARANTEED IN FROM THREE TO SIX MONTHS.

MONSIEUR LODOIS respectfully solicits all those who are bald, but desire to renew the natural covering of the head, to consult him any day between eleven and five o'clock, at the Rooms of the French Hygienic Society, 54, Conduit-street, Regent-street, W.

M. Lodois is so certain of success that he will enter into a contract on the principles of

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Pamphlets and full particulars of this marvellous and genuine remedy forwarded post free on application.

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London, July 29th, 1878.

DEAR SIR,—I beg to state that after using the Eau Malleron some time I have obtained quite a marvellous result. I am certain that through it I shall recover my hair exactly as it was before. I am indeed much obliged to you.

Yours very truly, URIO.

You may show my letter to any inquirer, and do what you think fit with it.

Navan, Ireland, Sept. 24, 1879.

DEAR SIR,—I have your bottle of Eau Malleron finished, and found it made a great improvement on the spots. Please send me another bottle, for which I enclose you a P.O.O. for 25s. 6d.

Yours obediently, J. F.

Acton, near London, W., Oct. 27, 1879.

SIR,—Would you kindly send me a 15s. bottle of Eau Malleron. Dr. B. thinks his hair is really improving, and he detects a certain unmistakable growth of hair on the bald places, but as yet very partial.

I am, faithfully yours, F. B.

Bury St. Edmunds, Sept. 1st, 1879.

DEAR SIR,—Please send a large-size bottle of Eau Malleron. Enclosed is a Post-office Order for 25s. 6d., made payable to "M. Lodois."

W. F.

P.S.—I have tried the Eau (about twelve months ago now) on a previous occasion, and was satisfied with the result; and it is evident that I ought to have continued its use.

Oct. 17th, 1879.

Miss J. encloses M. LODOIS a P.O.O. for £1 8s., and wishes him to send her a pint bottle of Eau Malleron, and a 3s. bottle of the detergent lotion, the same as M. Lodois sent her last June. She is much pleased with the progress her hair has made.—Laurie-park, Sydenham.

PRICES OF THE EAU MALLERON.

Half-Pint size ... 15s. 6d.

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Securely packed and forwarded to any part of the world, with pamphlet and directions for use, upon receipt of remittance, payable to

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PERFECT RESTORATION OF THE HAIR
SECURED IN EIGHT DAYS WITHOUT THE
USE OF NITRATE.

EAU FIGARO.

The hair is a filament of an epidemic nature, and of cylindrical form. It is composed of a tube in which circulates a medullary substance brought by the blood vessels and the nervous fibre placed at the base of the bulb, which becomes the agent of the colouring process. When, by reason of age, or after premature fatigue, the secretion of the colouring matter does not take place, the hair becomes white without losing its vitality; for although colourless, the medullary substance continues still its work of nutrition.

EAU FIGARO.

It is not age only which discolours the hair. When that phenomenon is produced, it is time to employ an agent which, under the shape of a toilet water with an exquisite perfume, attains the end which we have in view, that is, replaces externally colouring matter which Nature no longer supplies internally. It is not therefore a question here of eternal spring, or reconstruction of the roots, &c. It is this Restorer, the EAU FIGARO, the product of the researches and studies of eminent practitioners, which the French Hygienic Society presents to the public without artifice, and as may be seen, without fine phrases and deceptive promises. With the EAU FIGARO, one need have no fear that perspiration, sea baths, or sulphurous baths, &c., will make any difference.

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For the beard and black hair, which is difficult to dye, we recommend the "Instantaneous Eau Figaro." The result is marvellous, and requires no preparation or washing. Price 6s. per bottle.

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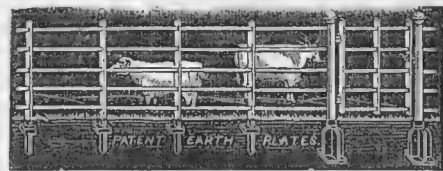
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NOTE.—All our preparations are free from grease, and dry immediately. They are free from smell, and are made with the greatest care. Directions for the use enclosed in each box.

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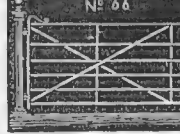
ALL KINDS OF HURDLES, GATES, &c.



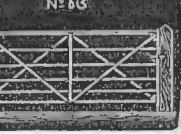
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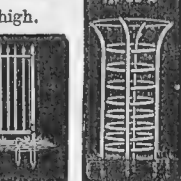
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UNCLIMBABLE HURDLE.
6ft. long, 4ft. high.

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PATENT Chain Harrows
WITH
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PRICE:

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MRS. BATCHELOR'S**HAIR COLOR RESTORER.**

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A trial will convince. Perfectly harmless.

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"SPRATTS PATENT" are Purveyors by

Appointment to all the principal Shows and

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OVER 30 GOLD, SILVER,**and BRONZE MEDALS,**

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In 6d. boxes sufficient for 3 pints, 1s. boxes for 7 pints.

To prevent disappointment, each packet must bear the inventor's address—
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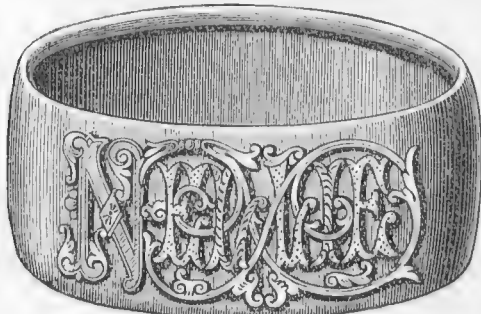
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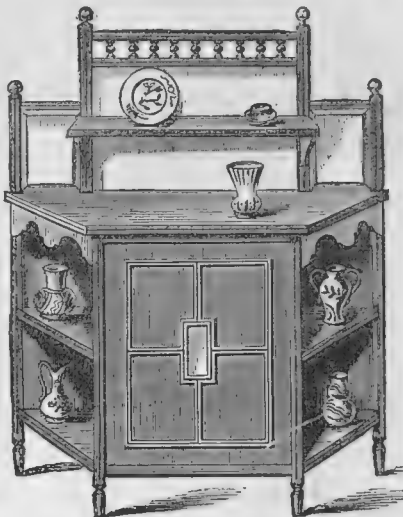
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Any name complete, or initials, in raised entwined letters of exquisite design and finish. Price in Hall-marked silver (graduated widths), 35s., 37s., and 39s. Best morocco case, 4s. 6d.
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£25, Complete.

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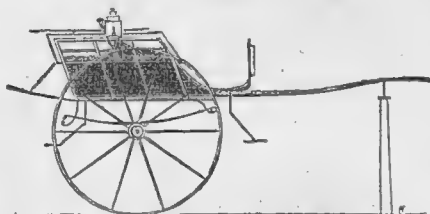
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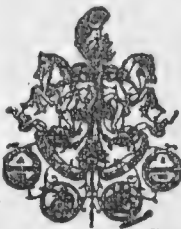
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A TIGHT CARTRIDGE—"LOOK, MASSA

A.B. FROST

got off best and finished first half way round, and that sort of thing, which would have been very funny with any other hero; and I clambered into the train at Boulogne, where it was raining harder than at Folkestone, only hoping that Leonard might not have taken refuge at the hotel in the Rue dela—something that his man did not rightly remember.

For once in the course of my expedition something like luck seemed to attend my chase. Monsieur Leonard had gone to the Imperial, whither I first drove, but Monsieur was out for the moment: his room was 21. Run to ground at last, I thought, and giving the porter, who knew us both, particular instructions to tell Leonard directly he came in that I had arrived, and wanted him to dine with me, I strolled down the boulevard towards an English club, of which I was a member, and where I thought it possible that he might be; for though not belonging to the club himself, many of our friends did. Leonard was not there, however, though I found a man who had seen him that afternoon, so I returned to the Imperial.

Had M. Leonard come back? He had, almost the moment after Monsieur went out, and left a note for Monsieur, which the speaker handed to me. I opened it in fear and trembling. Surely he had not slipped off again? But he had.

"DEAR CHARLIE," the note ran,—

"What the deuce are you doing over here? Wish I'd known you were coming, and we'd have travelled together. Sorry I can't stay to dine, but I'm off to Nice by the 7.15. Got to see about a villa for my uncle.—Yours, H. L."

Nice! A little journey of something over 24 hours! But I would have followed him now if he had gone to the Fiji Islands. Why had I not left a note telling him that Muffin Boy wasn't meant for the Gloucester Cup? However, the next thing was to go to Nice, and there was certainly plenty of time on the journey to think what I would do when I got there. The Continental Bradshaw is a particularly irritating work at all times, especially for a journey where one gets the "a.m." and "p.m." mixed up. The 7.15 train by which Leonard had gone I could not have caught, for it was nearly 7 when I reached the Imperial, and the station for Marseilles is, as most people are aware, nearly an hour's drive from the Boulevard des Capucines.

There seemed to be a train at 11.10 p.m., arriving at Nice at 3.54, and another at 11.15 a.m., reaching its destination at 2.6, together with one at 8 p.m., which never got to Nice at all. The 11.15 in the morning seemed to be the best, so I determined to dine comfortably, and go to the play for an hour or two, trying to forget Leonard and Muffin Boy and my £500.

Next morning I set off on my new journey, and on the afternoon of the following day we drew up at Nice, the exquisite views seen from the window of the train, as we followed the Mediterranean Coast line, almost compensating for the trouble and annoyance. And now, how to find Leonard? The villa which his uncle, the Earl of Horchester, had occupied during a former winter was up at Cimiez, I knew, so thither I drove. No! That villa was taken by an Italian family. Down the hill again, and round to some score of the hotels which are so plentiful. Neither Kraft nor Chauvain know M. Leonard, and at the Hotels des Anglais, d'Angleterre, de France, de la Grand Bretagne, Méditerranée, and the rest, I have no better luck. He is not at the theatre, and I go to bed at last, tired and angry, wondering whether he will turn up next day, and trying to think that he is certain to take a stroll in the Promenade des Anglais before breakfast.

But he does not. I walk and drive all over the town in vain, till at last, about half-past twelve, I meet little Fluterton, a friend and member of the Smoking Room, on the Promenade.

"Hullo!" he says; "you here, too?"

"Yes; arrived yesterday," I reply, and before I can begin my story he breaks in with—

"Just been seeing Leonard off; he turned up yesterday."

"And he's gone?" I ask, my feelings not permitting me to say more.

"Yes. He only just came to choose between a couple of houses for his people this winter. I'm glad they're coming. He's off to England straight," Fluterton remarks.

Then I tell him my story: how I have been in hot pursuit since Monday evening, and now it is Friday morning; and I detail all the circumstances connected with the miserable Muffin Boy and my £500.

"What a lark!" he says, laughing heartily; and I don't like it.

"It may strike you as being extremely funny, but I can't see the humour of being dragged to all parts of Europe for the sake of finding that I'm sold when I get there," I observe, somewhat severely.

"Yes, I know, my dear fellow, it is a bore, and I'm really very sorry; but it is so jolly absurd!" and he tries unsuccessfully to repress a chuckle. "However," he continues, "you can't go till the evening, so you'd better come and dine with us. We've got a house, you know, and Leonard stayed with us last night."

This accounted for my fruitless search through the hotels, then; but I forgave Fluterton for his want of sympathy, and was led off to pass the rest of the day with his mother and sisters, though I was in too great a state of excitement and irritation to thoroughly appreciate their amiable kindness; and by as early a train as possible I set off again on my chase. From Nice to London is a far cry; but engines and energy can do much in these days, and within considerably less than 48 hours I was once more in London and on my way to Leonard's chambers. It would be very hard if he had again escaped me.

"Mr. Leonard returned?" I inquired of his man as he appeared at the door.

"Yes, sir, master's returned from abroad, but he has gone down to the country. Left last night, sir, for Horchester. He has been to Nice, sir, but only stayed—"

"Yes, I know; when will he be back?" I interrupted.

"Well, sir, it's uncertain, I think. I was not to forward letters or papers till I heard, sir," the man answered; and here was another source of perplexity.

The best thing to be done seemed to carry on the pursuit without flagging, however, especially as I was sure of a friendly welcome from my errand friend's uncle. There was a train at 7.10 in the morning, reaching Horchester at 10.30, and at any rate I might have the consolation of discussing the matter with Leonard. This was Monday, and the race was to be run next day. He must have put my £500 on the wretched Muffin Boy, who now figured in the quotations at 33 to 1, while 125 to 100 was the last recorded bet against King Pippin. As the train carried me down to Horchester I had the pleasure of reading the analyses of the prophets, most of whom went for the King in big letters, with the reservation that the next three favourites might either of them win if anything happened to him, and that it would be well to keep some three or four others on the safe side, while danger might be apprehended from a couple of outsiders—of which Muffin Boy was not one. He was thrown over by all except one prophet, who declared that he was well in, and if he only retained his spring form might, despite the vicissitudes of the market, effect a surprise.

Horchester Towers, as it need hardly be said, is situated some five miles from the railway. We reached the station about ten

minutes late, and in waiting was, luckily, a groom in a dog-cart, come over to fetch a parcel, so I was spared an hour's journey in a damp and unpleasant fly. Mr. Leonard had, I learned, arrived the night before, so at last my quarry seemed run to earth.

"Was Mr. Leonard in?" I inquired, on reaching the door.

"No, he was not. Had gone out with the gentlemen. Would I see my lord?" was the reply.

I would, and did.

"Yes. Herbert arrived last night. He has kindly been to Nice to look after a villa for us. His aunt wished him to choose the place himself, as agents give singularly flattering accounts to houses they wish to dispose of. The hounds meet to-day for the first time, you know—you may have seen—and he rode over to see them thrown off, at any rate," Lord Horchester answers.

"Won't he be back this afternoon?" I inquire.

"No; we couldn't persuade him to stay. They were going to draw towards Chorlinton, and hounds are almost certain to run towards Hartlebury, so he will put up his horse and catch the train. He must be in town this evening, as he is going to Gloucester, I think he said, to-morrow," I am informed.

To Gloucester, no doubt, to see Muffin Boy take that expensive gallop.

"If you are so anxious to see him at once you had better get on a horse and try to catch them up. They only left some half-hour ago, and as it is the first morning there may be some delay. We shall be very glad to see you if you can come back, and, if not, leave your horse at either of the inns and he can be fetched with Herbert's," Lord Horchester kindly suggested, and I was glad to accept.

There was, of course, no time for boots or breeches, even if I could have borrowed anything of the sort, and as I have tried borrowed breeches on one occasion, I should not have been eager to repeat the experiment, incongruous and opposed to the unities as trousers may seem at a meet. Within seven minutes I had swallowed two glasses of peach brandy, made play with some sandwiches that happened to be at hand, and was on the back of a wiry little chestnut mare, galloping along the grass by the side of the road at a very respectable pace. The meet at the cross roads, was a goodsix miles from the Towers, and in less than half an hour I was wiping the perspiration from my forehead—the first few gallops, particularly on a pulling horse, try a man in rough condition—and looking round for the hounds. The trampled grass, some gaps in a fence, and a muddy track leading to the easiest way over, gave unmistakable evidence that here they had been lately. It was twelve o'clock, and rather past, however, and where were they now?

"Hounds be gone down Chorlinton-lane, sir," a rustic grinned, seeing me standing up in the stirrups and gazing around; so with a word of thanks to my informant, I started off again for Chorlinton. But though the hounds had been in that direction they had diverged. I soon lost the track, set off on a false scent, got hopelessly astray, and it was not until nearly three o'clock that I suddenly came across a straggler bound for home, and learning my direction from him, suddenly perceived the hunt before me, at the end of a long slip of cover, as I reached the top of a slight rise. Several of my friends were among the men, but no Leonard. To have found him would have seemed too much good luck considering what a vein of ill-fortune I was working through at the time; so instead of asking where he was, I simply remarked that he was gone, of course?

"Yes," cheerfully replied one of his cousins; "he left about a quarter of an hour ago. He's bound for town. Off racing to-morrow, I think he said."

"That's just what I want to see him about particularly. Can I catch him, do you think? No, thanks, I can't stay; I wish I could. I must see him. What station was he bound for?" I ask.

"I hardly know. Did Herbs say where he was going?" he inquired of his brother.

"No, I didn't hear him. You see there's not much to choose as regards distance. Hartlebury's nearer town, but we always put up at Chorlinton when we can, and the old mare will be there all night, I expect."

"Then good-bye—sorry to go and leave you, but I must find him to-night," I said, and turning round started off towards a sign-post I had lately passed pointing to Chorlinton. But here, for almost the first time in the eccentric chase, an idea struck me. Hartlebury was not much further than Chorlinton, and whether Leonard started for there or not, he would be obliged to pass through. It was now 3.30; the train left Chorlinton at 4.3—this I had ascertained. It was eight miles from Chorlinton to Hartlebury, and I was about three miles distant from each—in the centre of what was nearly a semi-circle. The best thing to do was clearly to make for Hartlebury, and wait till the train came up, and this I accordingly did, arriving at the latter station soon after 4, whereas the train could not be due till about 4.25.

I dismounted and sauntered into the station, where I found the amiable official who did duty as station-master.

"When is the next train for town?" I asked, almost as a matter of form.

"Next train for town? 8.48 sir," he rejoined.

"8.48?" I exclaimed; "is not there one just due? It can't have passed?"

"Ah, sir, that don't stop here now; the 4.2 from Chorlinton it was, but it runs through, this month."

"Are you sure?" I asked, desperately, and the station-master smiled.

"Yes, sir, I'm sure enough. I've been here for nigh upon ten years, and I know the run of the trains pretty well. It was took off last month," he rejoined.

There could be no doubt about it, and there was none. Punctual almost to a moment the train that was "took off" ran through, as I had been assured it would. Did I see Leonard in a carriage as it passed me? Speed was a little slackened, and a man standing up in one of the compartments looked just like the object of my irritating quest.

"Have you a telegraph office here?" I asked, for at any rate a telegram would reach him, and luckily there was a chance of sending; so to his private address and to each of the three clubs he frequented, including, of course, the Smoking Room, I despatched a message, warning him against the deceptive Muffin Boy, and pointing to King Pippin as a comparatively certain winner. At least I should have shown him that I was not such a fool as I seemed, and he might by skilful manipulation save my money.

CHAPTER III.

THE telegrams sent off, it did not seem to matter much whether I went to town by the 8.48 or by some corresponding train from another station, or waited comfortably till next morning and dined at the Towers. I should have reached there too late to see Leonard that night in all probability, and I was rather angry with him, because of the erratic wanderings to which he had condemned me. They were in no wise his fault, but that did not make me any the less vexed with him; rather the more, perhaps. My telegrams contained all that I wanted to say, and however he

dodged, as appeared to be his wont, he was sure to find one of the four that would be waiting his arrival. I returned, therefore, to the Towers, and for a brief period forgot the worry of the luckless bet in the comfort of a pleasant dinner. Though they lived in the saddle, most of the inhabitants of this delightful house, and though Lord Horchester had a few animals in training, they were far from being a sporting community. Someone after dinner said he supposed the Gloucester Cup was a certainty for King Pippin, and someone else said, "Yes, you couldn't get money on at evens yesterday," and that was all. I did not advocate Muffin Boy's claims to consideration, bitterly hating his deleterious and indigestible name. With the second glass of Madeira it flashed across my mind that after all he might win, but the reflective influence of a cigar assured me that I was in for a "real bad thing."

Next morning I was off at daybreak, and should have reached town before nine, but by one of those unlucky flukes which had been pursuing me for the past week we suddenly pulled up at a lonely spot between two stations; something had gone off the line, or happened to a luggage train before us, and for rather more than an hour we were delayed. The blessings showered on directors, engine-drivers, guards, points-men, navvies, engineers, &c., need not be repeated. Instead of arriving at a quarter to nine, it was twenty minutes past ten before Euston was reached, and twenty to eleven before I was at the door of Leonard's rooms on my hopeless errand. The special had started from Paddington at 10.15, and I had hoped to catch Leonard in good time for ten minutes' chat before he was off; now there was nothing for it but to drive to Victoria-street and see what had happened.

"Mr. Leonard has gone, I suppose?" I ask his man.

"Did not come home at all last night, sir. Went straight on, I presume, to Gloucester, sir. Races is on to-day."

"Yes, so I believe," I mildly answer. "Is there a telegram waiting for him?"

"Yes, sir. Came yesterday about half-past five. He wasn't here to receive it," he tells me; and with an inarticulate exclamation I retire to find out how a man feels when he has paid £500 for the privilege of making an ass of himself.

In due course out came the evening papers.

Lord Russell's b.c. King Pippin - - - 1

Mr. Jennings' Trouville - - - 2

Sir W. Heseltine's Half Moon - - - 3

and the journal further stated that it was won in a canter by half a dozen lengths.

That evening I was engaged to dine, and, happily, with some people who did not talk racing; but in the evening I strolled down to the Smoking Room. The usual cheery group was round the fire, and lounging in an easy chair, a little away from the rest, reading the special *Standard* and quietly smoking, was the man I had been chasing through Europe—Herbert Leonard.

He looked up with perfect calmness, and quietly said, "Hullo! Good evening. How are you?"

"Well, my dear fellow, I may say that I am pretty well blown with pursuing you for the last six months, or what seems like it. I've been to Paris, Nice, to the Towers, to Chorlinton, and some dozen other vile holes, to say nothing of a score or two visits to your rooms," I tell him.

"And why all this exertion?" he coolly asks, with a look of innocent surprise on his face.

"Haven't you got my telegrams?" I ask in turn.

"Oh, yes, of course. I received it just now. Are there any more? It was so late I didn't go home to dress, and came in to dine as I was."

"Any more? Isn't that enough? Have you been to Gloucester?" I inquire.

"Yes, just back. Went straight on from the Towers, changed my things in the train, I hate the worry of going racing from town early in the morning. It was all right," he rejoins.

"All right? What was? Backing a brute that wasn't even started to win? I don't blame you, my dear fellow, but it looks to me all wrong," I answer.

"All wrong? How do you mean?" he asks, in surprise.

"Why, didn't you back Muffin Boy for me?"

"Certainly not! Didn't you receive my letter?"

"Letter? What letter?"

"A letter I wrote you ten days ago, telling you about it," he answers.

"My dear fellow, you astound me. I have received no letter at all. What was it about? Are you sure you sent it?"

"I'm sure I put it in the box, and it must have gone."

"Then it could not have been correctly addressed. Where did you send it to?" I ask.

"Your rooms, and it was correctly addressed, I'm sure, for I looked carefully," he says.

"How do you mean looked? Did not you address it yourself?" I ask again.

"It just happens I did not. The writing table was full, so I scribbled a line in pencil, and as no fellow moved, I asked Harquier, who was at the table, to write an envelope to you. I'm certain he did so, for I read it over to see if it was all right," he goes on.

A light dawns upon me as he continues:—

"I told you I had heard that Muffin Boy wasn't going, and that I had got you 2 to 1 against King Pippin. I couldn't do better, and had to look round to get that."

Slowly I draw from my pocket Harquier's letter, the epistle which, as recorded at the end of the first chapter, I had put unopened into my pocket, believing that it was simply to say that he could not come to dine with me.

"That's the letter!" Leonard cries, and opening it I read, in pencil, "Muffin Boy all wrong. I have put your money on King Pippin. Got you 2 to 1."

Afterwards I heard that Harquier had sent his own communication to me at another club, the one where I had asked him to dine.

With Leonard's letter in my pocket the whole time, answering so conclusively the query I was anxious to put to him, I had followed him in this long journey. Carefully and steadfastly carrying about with me the information I sought, I had chased him from his rooms to Paris, to Nice, back to London, to Horchester Towers, to his rooms, and to the club. Had I only not jumped at conclusions, and read the two lines and a half he had written, I should have saved all the worry of what I think may be correctly called AN ECCENTRIC CHASE.

WHIST.—TO MY PRETTY PARTNER.

DEAREST of partners! one well may see

Most of your strength in the diamonds lies:

For, whatso'er in your hand may be,

You've always two in your sparkling eyes.

Ah! let us hope that the trumps are red:

Playing with you, I am much afraid

Wandering fancies will fill my head

More with the Heart than with club or spade!

"P."

THE SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT'S CHRISTMAS,

By FREDERIC BOYLE,

Author of “Camp Notes,” “The Savage Life,” “Diary of an Expelled Correspondent,” &c., &c.

WHEN, at the outset of life, a man finds something he can do better than his neighbours, he makes a very pleasant and useful discovery. Most people cannot even persuade themselves that they have a peculiar genius, unless for the compounding of punch or salad, or for some graceful but unremunerative employment of that class. Others mistake their bent, and thus start in a wrong direction; others follow the right track unwillingly, believing that their real strength lies elsewhere. It is a great blessing for himself, sometimes for humanity, when a Samson feels his thews and puts them to their best use, but I imagine that it is scarcely less important for him to know where his strength will not avail. And this latter study becomes more difficult as he grows emboldened by success. If a late Prime Minister had been less clever and versatile, to accuse him of aspiring to command the Channel fleet and to perform a surgical operation, would have raised nobody's laughter. Lord Verulam knew very well what he could do, but he evidently did not know, what everyone else perceives, that he could not write a philosophical romance. History is full of great men who did not measure their tether.

This introduction is in the grand manner of our ancestors, who would preface a recipe for marmalade with an essay on the Hesperides, and would bring the laws of Solon to bear upon a parish pump. The point of my allusion to Lord Verulam lies in this, that neither he nor I could write an interesting fiction;—he, however, did not know his impotency whilst I recognise mine. Construction and imagination are not granted to all who write glibly enough—pray understand that the parallel with Lord Bacon is dropped. When the editor of this journal asked me for a Christmas tale, he showed a flattering ignorance of my *moyens*. Fortunately, if I cannot invent stories, I can tell what my own eyes have seen, and some Christmas days I have passed in strange company. It must be my fault if the reader does not find some interest in the plain truth of these descriptions.

Elsewhere you will read what exciting incidents of one kind or another may mark Christmastide at home; I have had none such as yet. In the hard winter of '51—or was it '55?—I remember picking up a postman, asleep in the snow and almost dead, as we drove from the family gathering. Perhaps his story had thrilling fascination, but I never heard it. Let us pass on to Egypt, where I spent my first Yule, after embarking on those travels which seem destined to outdo the legendary wanderings of Ulysses, or of the gentleman who wore that irrepressible cork leg. My Nile trip, thank Heaven! preceded the era of steamers and Cook's tourists. Not many consolations do I perceive for advancing age, having distrusted Cicero when young, and now forgotten the very language of his wisdom. But one I find, neglected of that philosopher for reasons good, which somewhat comforts me. Who now could hope to land at Thebes, and find the place his own—no touts to rush at him, no photograph-sellers, no guides, no “box wallahs,” no nothing but the stupendous ruin and its bleak, sad, denizens? Two donkey boys only met us at the shore; two dancing girls, venturing down from Esné, squatted and watched on a sand drift. In the vast colonnade looming over us, a few sordid, blue-robed women flitted by, a few naked children stood staring. Presently, with whoop and halloo, these descended to beg, but their fictitious spirits soon died away, and they drooped off silently. And we, on that Christmas morning, we rode through stately gates and avenues of broken statues, through colonnades and courts, beneath cyclopean walls, towards Karnak. Do not tremble prematurely, thinking I mean to describe these wonders. I remember too vaguely, and is it not all chronicled in guide books? What dwells in my mind is a vision of buildings loftier than Western raving has imagined, erect, symmetrical, an abode of giants divine of soul. Miles of temple, acres of palace, incised with stories of triumph and devotion, all carved, wrought, gilded, painted! What I recollect distinctly, though nearly twenty years have gone, is that world's marvel Karnak, and the tingling of my blood as I rode into its silent hall. How many are the trunks in that stone forest? You can look it up in the books, but I think they are fourteen in the central avenue, and a hundred and forty-four in the aisles. Such pillars! my neck ached with sketching their capitals, six men with hands joined cannot encircle them. Those in the aisles are smaller, but huge single shafts of granite. And not one has fallen in 3,000 years; one only leans against its neighbour. The paint is there upon them, bands and stripes of colour. Before that time or since, I have beheld all the monuments of human grandeur. I have trod that hall which records its boast in gold and marble: “If Paradise be on earth, it is here—here—here!” And the vaunt is justified. The Delhi palace stands beyond all that mortal senses could desire; but Karnak was built for the gods.

And here—ignorant youths!—we had proposed to eat our Christmas feast; hither had we despatched a lordly hamper. Hushed and full of shame we ordered it away, and found refuge in Joseph's Sanctuary, where the learned trace that patriarch's name as that of a benefactor; he presented the temple with a canoe of purest gold and much besides. There, beneath the azure roof adorned with stars—not sky, but enamelled granite—we ate a meal not unworthy of the spot whence “luxury” has passed into every civilised tongue. What a good cook was our dragoman, who is still alive and working, as I rejoiced to hear when I passed through Egypt the other day. He had the secret of some dishes unequalled in merit for campaigning. Does anyone know, besides he, how to spatchcock pigeons in claret? I have travelled over the world, asking vainly.

My next Christmas worth recording was spent aboard of the Messageries steamer Cambodge, in the Indian ocean. Well do I remember amongst my fellow-passengers the Anglo-Indian widow of a Consul-General in China, returning with two fair daughters. The patronymic escapes me, but not the *petits noms*. Bless us! Lili, that slender, black-eyed girl, is a middle-aged matron by this time, and Daisy, the bright little *cadette* in socks, may very well be nursing her sixth. Do you remember Mademoiselle or, I should say, Madame Lili, the concoction of that plum-pudding which you pretended to supervise in right of sex, and a quarteron of English blood? Do you remember how hard you were upon my errors in the sacred phraseology of the French *cuisine*, and how chivalrously I abstained from re-creation? What a mess we made of that pudding with Mlle. Daisy's uninvited assistance! The cook brutally sent it up in a tureen and the stewards served it with a ladle.

If this harmless allusion should bring a gentle note of reproof from the ladies whom I quitted at Alexandria sixteen years ago, I shall be greatly pleased but not at all surprised. Strange cases of this sort have occurred in my own experience. The incidental mention of a name in some record of my wanderings has twice led to the discovery of persons long lost to sight.

Christmas of 1864 I shall never forget, though its story may be dismissed in few words. I had embarked at Marseilles in a

steamer bound for Cagliari, the filthiest, most abominable craft I have ever tried in Europe. Very rough weather we made, even for that bad time of year, and on Christmas Eve the captain laid our anchors bow and stern, whilst the gale blew over. So, instead of dining at Ajaccio, we lay pitching off the coast, nearly everyone seasick and resigned for the worst. To me, as I paced the heaving deck, the captain came secretly—a shaggy ruffian, of the class described by Smollett. “The lady below is very ill,” he said, in a frightened voice. “There's neither stewardess nor doctor on board. All the other passengers are seasick. I rely on you to help me if it gets serious!” Never in all my life was I more frightened. “What—why—how?” I exclaimed, but the fellow's arguments were unanswerable. I went desperately into the ladies' cabins fore and aft, with all my worldly fortune in my hand, so to speak; but one glance showed that none there could help herself, much more another. Then the captain insisted that I should behold the woman whose cries rang through the ship—one of those silly fancies which the vagaries of pre-revolutionary law have planted deep in Gallic breasts. She lay in a state-room apart, and I looked from the threshold. That moment's glance showed me one of three loveliest women whom fate has presented to my eyes. A most miserable Christmas Day I passed, expecting each moment to be summoned for I knew not what, nor the captain either. But a kinder fate prevailed. Next day, with considerable risk, we made Ajaccio, and the first boat which reached us contained the lady's mother and half a dozen relatives. An hour afterwards she was carried down the gangway, whilst the captain and I, mightily relieved, drank a glass of wine together.

The next strange Christmas recalled to my mind was spent in the mining village of Libertad, on the gold mountains of Nicaragua. Does the quaint little hamlet still exist? has it grown to the dimensions of a “rush,” or have the Woolwa Indians burnt it, as they threatened? Heaven knows, but few mortals. No voice can reach the world of civilised men through those close woods of Mosquito, across the bare, sad uplands of Chontales. I had wandered thither—I don't quite know how or why—in company with John Gladwyn Jebb, Esq., if it be disrespectful towards the public to write down my old friend as “Jack.” J. G. J. and I had been at school together; then, whilst I went to Brasenose, he joined the Connaught Rangers in India; tired of the service and sold out; entered at Skimmery* as a fellow-commoner; tired of that, and agreed to accompany me in seeking the Itzimaya. You do not know what the Itzimaya is? Well, we did not find it, and what the legends say would be too long to tell. Ah, if I had to describe a Christmas Day in the Itzimaya! then would I have a tale that would ruffle up your spirits and put a tongue in every reader's mouth to cry derisive epithets at me! But that penalty would be cheap for one glance at the Maya city.

I should like to have heard the worthy Ellis recount those travels. Ellis was our joint groom. I imagine that he would have summed them up as a “daft spree,” a view we should have bitterly resented at the time, but perhaps not now. Why we went where we did, and went not where we intended, I can't explain to my own satisfaction, and J. G. J. is equally at a loss. Much effort of memory induces the suspicion that Captain Bedford Pim deranged our lucid plans. He persuaded us to take Nicaragua on our own way, and thus unwittingly diverted the only expedition which has yet been made to seek the Itzimaya. For in Nicaragua we heard of tombs mighty curious, and then again enthusiasts talked of white Indians dwelling in mysterious seclusion on the San Carlos river. Fired by the inspiring tale, we tried to raise an expedition of discovery, and this effort, I know not how, led us to San José de Costa Rica. The vague impression dwelling in my mind is that the reputed prowess of a certain Colonel Cauty drew us to San José; but that gallant soldier of fortune was just returning to England. So, having ridden across America from sea to sea, we rode back again. Then J. G. J. went to the Brazils, and I know not where. He is now settled in Colorado, whither I shall send this brief explanation of our joint proceedings in Central America. How relieved will he be, bless him! I can picture my dear old friend in his log hut at night, with head bent upon his hand, reflecting year after year, wondering till the brain reels, how and why and wherefore we did what we did, and left undone those things which were expected of us. But what larks!

That is how it was, as nearly as can be made out at present, that I spent a Christmas on the borders of Mosquito. Report had not lied about big cairns and ruins there. We explored them diligently, employing all the *ladrones* of the country side. If such eager researches brought little result the reason is that there was little to bring. You may see our trophies duly ticketed in the British Museum, and I keep somewhere the assurance of the trustees' gratitude for our valuable and important gift. The acknowledgment would have seemed more warm, had it not been printed and misdirected. But these digressions must cease. I can generally guide my pen straight enough to facts; but the memory of our devious, heedless, joyous scurry from ocean to ocean and back, would justify, if ought can, a wandering style.

So to Libertad, for the third time. Imagine a little settlement of frame houses and reed huts, where the rain it raineth every day at Christmas time. To gain it, one has ridden several hundred miles over bare, burnt highlands, where small hillocks rise, one over another, round and smooth as bubbles. Such they are, in truth—bubbles of earth and stone, floating above a molten sea. They rise or flatten, people tell you, when, with sick, noiseless shivering, the fire rolls in sudden flood beneath to burst through the open shafts of Cosquima and the Merivalles. Few dwell in that perilous waste, and these seek the valleys and winding ravines, where trees, hung from crown to root with Spanish moss, stand like cloaked mourners in procession. At the edge of this scene, where the deep woods of Mosquito block it like a wall, is Libertad, or was, among glens and torrents, groves of banana, fields of maize, and cactus hedges. It had, perhaps, 500 inhabitants, a tenth part foreigners. Droll fellows these were, French most of them, always at issue with the native population, and at war with the authorities. At this time they had assembled from lonely mines and diggings in the wood, to see a Christian face, eat Christian meats, and, above all, drink of Christian liquor. If I might digress, dear me! what reams of copy I could fill with the record of a week's absurdities. Incidents of love and war, with sports and songs between, employed our time as in the days of chivalry. No one went to bed much that week, amongst the foreigners at least. Some dozen of us slept, off and on, in the back premises of “the store,” on casks and bales. Each hour, day and night, a jovial crew from the other house of entertainment came to congratulate their friends with us, or these, suddenly fired by Christmas sentiment, leapt clattering from their perches to seek companionship below. The fiddling and the dancing ceased not from early afternoon till midnight, but the conversation of partners had always one shrill refrain, half angry, half admiring: “*Hombre sin verguenza, da!*” Mark that these girls were all respectable, as respectability goes in that country; also, that I saw no French digger intoxicated, though they drank enormous quantities of claret.

* Disrespect again towards the public, and flippancy towards that venerable institution, St. Mary's Hall, Oxford.

So Christmas Day arrived to cap the foolery. All the Indians of the neighbourhood assembled, with instruments of music, bringing their sisters, daughters, and cousins—their wives, too, probably, and grandmothers, but these I do not distinctly recollect. By Indians, of course, I mean *peons*—Christians—not the wild savages of Mosquito, whose drums could be heard sometimes in the mysterious forest. After watching the crowd awhile, J. G. J. and I rode out into the hills. A certain Mrs. Bulay, widow of a prosperous man, but too old for the dangerous journey back, had asked us to dine, with all the respectable diggers of the place;—poor thing, she was shot the same night, or the next, by a savage half-breed. A strange and amusing company sat down. Since that date I have eaten with criminals and refugees, Jews, Turks, and heretics of every degree; not to mention princes, viceroys, and ambassadors, whose entertainments don't bear any comparison. Nowhere do I recollect laughing more consumedly than at Libertad. Much of the wild slang lay beyond my comprehension, but M. Geraud ex-captain of the Imperial Navy, was good enough to translate it into the French of the Philistine. Of the dinner no more remains in my memory than in my constitution, but some quaint choruses still haunt me, amid a general reminiscence of racket and laughter and constant motion.

Returning to “the store” at dusk, we found there a crowd of Indian girls, rather frightened and silenced, but quite ready to accept all the little Christmas gifts their new acquaintances pressed on them. Dance they would not, however, until the sermon was done. Upon this Geraud mounted a cask and preached in the local *patois*. His subject was the deluge, and he seemed to treat it in quite a novel way. The diggers cried and rolled about with laughter, too breathless to translate. Therefore, I cannot tell you what views are held in Libertad about the deluge, but they seem to be mighty droll. All this is very unedifying, but if a man desire strictness of observance, he must not spend his Christmas in a gold digging. This I can say, that our fun if wild and noisy was innocent. Could all those who went to church that day declare as much?

The Indian men and women heard Geraud to the end with perfect gravity and respect. That was the best of it. I saw several glances with surprised disapprobation at the irreverent foreigners. When the preacher descended breathless from his cask, amidst uproarious cheering in all languages—for everyone but ourselves had understood this common speech—we strolled through the moonlight to see “Nativities.” I am not sure that is the technical word, but it will serve. A Nativity then is a scenic representation of those events which we commemorate at Christmas, and each Nicaraguan housewife, unless she be a downright pauper, will have a peep-show of her own. I had secured as my partner for the evening the prettiest girl of the fair, really a pretty creature and an heiress. Chattering gaily, she introduced me at the richest house of the village, where there is more wealth than appearances show. Here we saw marvels. The objects essential for a Nativity are three dolls, a toy bed, a cow, and a pigeon of wood, sugar, or plaster of Paris. With these, *à la rigueur*, the curtain may rise, but no family which respects itself would put such a mean exhibition on the stage. Rich people have their theatre six feet long and near as many wide, and every inch must bear a toy or ornament. At the back is placed the bed and the three dolls in attitudes fitting, whilst the cow stands behind, and the pigeon dangles overhead on a string. The dolls, of course, may be wax, or china, or wood; may be jointed or not; dressed in gold or rags. They may be big or little; may move their eyes or no. Such details are regulated by a person's means; but the limited resources of Nicaragua generally confine the population to one penny *par pièce*. Perhaps a regiment of tin soldiers stands next in order on the stage, then a few trees of painted shavings from a Noah's ark, and all the animals disposed about. Plaster of Paris images, pets of the ballet, copies from the antique, busts of Garibaldi, Napoleon, Bolivar, &c., tower above the Lilliputian scene. I do not exaggerate a bit. The importation of penny dolls, cheap doll's houses with furniture, Noah's arks, and all such things is large enough to puzzle Spanish-American traders unacquainted with the customs of the country. All that one could fancy most incongruous is put upon these household theatres at Christmas time, for the adoration of the faithful. And that adoration is freely, solemnly granted, with crossings and genuflections and telling of Ave Marias. I could get no more smiles from my Indian maid until the last Nativity had been visited and reverentially saluted. How pretty she was! To think that bright-eyed fairy is now a wrinkled, grizzled beldame, with no more figure than a brown dress upon a peg! But she is not the only one changed.

These reflections are too painful. What a pleasant Christmas was that of 1871-2, which I passed with David Arnot, at Eskdale! Who in England knows the name of David Arnot! who in South Africa ignores it! He and no other gave us Griqualand West. Taking up the cause of Nicholson's Waterboer when that chief's prospects were desperate, he fought single-handed against the Free State and the Transvaal. Twenty years the struggle lasted, with daily peril to Arnot's life; but he gained the day. Waterboer and Monkorane, in their gratitude, have made this fortunate politician the largest private landowner in the world. How many thousand square miles of pasture, how many fair daughters, Arnot possessed that Christmas time I have no idea. All the ladies in our quadrille called him papa, and all were lovely. But alas! there is no comfort in South African memories. Even the fair-haired, blue-eyed little thing who was youngest of all must now be rivaling the beauty of her elder sisters, as we admired it A.D. 1871. What a merry gathering it was at Eskdale! I drove from the busy anxious Diamond Fields to Hopetown, and in the cool morning time sped onwards, behind a pair of greys, the envy and delight of the neighbourhood. The springbok scattered from our path, their bounding flight arrested by no bullet in that kindly season. All the country side was flocking towards Eskdale. Youths galloped by on horseback, carts filled with ladies we passed. The scenery was dull and grey, the land burnt up, the heat more than tropical; but beauty—and dinner—were awaiting us, and no one regarded the unlovely *veldt*. Some of our most prosperous diggers were of the company, but the words “diamond,” “carat,” “claim,” or “water” did not once get a hearing. The talk was of “homo” and girlish things; the only outcome of it laughter and pleasant frivolity. David Arnot sat smiling over all his broad, dark face in the midst of us, and with difficulty I obtained the few minutes of serious talk which I had come some hundred miles to obtain. Then there was racing, and shooting at the mark, whilst the ladies withdrew to rest a little before the dance. Delightful time! Let us try to forget that we are nine years older.

On December the 21st 1874-5, I had crossed the Prah, paddled by Bonny cannibals, had written a letter on the far bank under a cotton tree, and had dined with Evelyn Wood. Grant, of the Royals, was first across the river, and I second; but, in truth, several officers might have deprived me of that small distinction had they not been too busy. Returning with all speed, I reached Cape Coast in the forenoon of the 23th. What teeming recollections crowd on me as I think of that campaign! It was not my first. I had already seen war. But it was unique.





The days of Plevna do not haunt me. When I think of them I can recall the noise and the sick excitement, the growl and crackle of musketry, the bursting of shells, and the boom of cannon. I remember that terrible orchard where we lunched, poor Mac Gahan, Dobson of the *Daily News*, and Jackson of the *New York Herald*. How the rain poured, and the shells whizzed just below! The air was full of music, as of a thousand Æolian harps—the singing of iron fragments and bullets overhead. I tried to count the boom of cannon, and in three minutes by the watch, excluding three doubtful, I numbered one hundred and six.

But the Turkish war does not hang in one's mind like that of the Gold Coast. Its incidents were ten thousand times more awful, but between-whiles one lived more or less in Christian fashion, with a clear sky above, the foe in view, and civilisation behind. The Gold Coast war was a six months' struggle with wood-demons, unseen, seldom felt, always threatening. How often at night, alone or in a bivouac of three or four, we heard the echoing beat of drums, the wail of cow-horns, and the superb chant of the Ashanti war song. At each turn in the narrow path one travelled, a volley might issue from the trees. Why an enemy famed for enterprise and recklessness of life never tried to cut the road—the one road we had—is a question asked in vain. It was not unusual, in the army as outside, to dispute Sir Garnet's claim to high ability. Experience and wider observation have shown me that our general had to face conditions wholly new, which he met with new tactics, and succeeded at every point. Greater merit than this cannot be claimed for a soldier. A fine confidence he showed when his strategy came to the test. One of memory's pictures freshest in my eye is the small clearing of Egginkassi, Sir Garnet walking quietly up and down, cigar in mouth, and hands behind him, in a ring of fire. He had made the best dispositions possible, and it only remained to watch. The general had thought, had worked; now he called on his soldiers for their part. Aides-de-camp and messengers hurried out from the wood, gave their report, received cool instructions, and vanished. Wounded men came limping up, or were borne on stretchers, and the general had a word for each. I have seen commanders white with excitement, others that seemed stupid with anxiety. One great general, rather known than famous, walked to and fro, with head downcast, curiously picking lumps of earth, and scrutinising them with interest. I have seen only Sir Garnet, who was quiet, dignified, and wholly himself.

It was a quick journey I had before me, leaving Prahsu on Dec. 22, to arrive in Cape Coast Castle for Christmas Day. Dawn and dewy eve saw me tramping through the mud, my hammock swinging behind, and my carriers panting in the rear. The sky was visible only in those small clearings we had made, where a lonely engineer superintended the building of huts for the army soon to arrive. I reached the hospitable house of Mr. Selby at 10 a.m., when the inmates were preparing for church. Amongst these was a young clerk named Gould, a fine Devonshire lad, who died of fever some weeks afterwards. Neither of us felt inclined for church, and I sat in the balcony, watching a chief's house opposite, whilst Gould went to dress. A mighty handsome girl was that chief's daughter, as beauty goes in negroland. An exquisite figure she displayed, her eyes were large, soft, and well opened, nose straight, and lips not too expanded for prettiness. As usual, she was sitting under a palm tree in the compound, whilst two or three slaves dressed her long wool. Operations of the toilet and cuisine were conducted all day long in that compound, where an indefinite number of wives, daughters, and slave girls passed their abundant leisure. To me, drowsily amused by the scene, arrived young Gould in awful consternation. His costume was as artless as that of the Fantees outside, his face pale with alarm. "Oh, Lord!" cries he, "the devil is upstairs!"

"Where?" I ask, starting up.

"Sitting on my chair, by heaven!" Gould replies.

It was a chance not to be missed. I bounded up the ricketty steps and entered the room. Every chair was vacant! "It will be my turn next," I said severely.

"No, no!" exclaimed Gould; "look! he's there still!"

I looked, and sitting on the chair I saw a brown, soft, unformed lump, about as large as a man's fist. We drew closer and surveyed the object. It seemed at first a ball of fur, brown and prettily mottled; then great knees became discernible around the ball, then legs crouched up—a horrible spider, watching us with big devilish eyes! My nerves have had much hardening against surprise, but that fearful brute shook them. There is no creature in the world, not even the *pieuvre* of romance, so fiendish as the African tarantula. He measures from eight to ten inches from toe to toe, his legs are thick as straws, and his crimson beak is almost as large as a sparrow's, but curved like that of a parrot. Instead of claws he has suckers on his great feet, with which he clings until torn off piecemeal, whilst his jaws are buried in the flesh. Each pad leaves a painful blister, and the jagged wound of the beak is hard to cure, but persons die of the shock rather than the hurt. Imagine Gould's escape! After bathing, he was just about to sit upon the chair when his eye caught sight of this monster. Fancy what might have been—the sudden pang, the grasp at that furry mass, the impotent rending at its immovable hold, and the savage gnawing of the brute! I would rather be bitten by any snake in the list than by a tarantula. We speared this fellow on a Bowie knife, unknowing at the time that natives say he can and does spring great distances to attack. I remember that I gave the *spolia opima* to Mr. Commissary Ravenscroft, who is interested in entomology. Only three tarantulas were met with in this campaign—that mentioned, one killed after a gruesome midnight struggle, by Dr. Samuels, and one which Captain Hart found on his bed in camp. Such was my little Christmas adventure on the Gold Coast.

And so, passing seasonable experiences of Paris and Vienna, I come to the last, that of 1878-9. It was at Quetta. I had expected to Christmas very drearly, with some promiscuous wayfarers like myself, hurrying across the frozen valley, to overtake General Stewart; for the batteries and detachments with whom I had struck acquaintance in the Bolan were all left behind. Of the chief's position we knew nothing, nor of the forces already collected. General Biddulph had been reconnoitring from the Kojak Amram mountains for a fortnight past, and I reached Quetta in great alarm, fearing to be behindhand. But a little army lay there, awaiting final arrangements, and my friend, General Hughes, did not propose to start until the 26th. I joyfully accepted a chance of feasting—it might be for the last time—at a civilised table. It dwells not in my recollection how I made the acquaintance of Captain Lister R.H.A., but his kindness is not to be forgotten. Instead of sleeping in an airy tent, I found myself a guest in a little bungalow, of no pretension certainly, neither painted, ceilinged, nor carpeted, but sound enough to keep out the cold. Nor do I remember which amongst so many good fellows invited me to eat a Christmas dinner at the "station mess." Invited I was, however, and my servants duly paraded with the rest at 2 p.m., each carrying his master's *couvert*, seat, and contribution to the feast. Chance guests like myself provided liquids, whilst the turkey and the piece of beef had been brought from India to fatten weeks before. When we started for the banquet a servant went before, sword in one hand, and lantern in the other. We fol-

lowed in long, sheepskin coats, our revolvers ready to the hand; for Quetta is the rendezvous of fanatics on this side, as is Peshawar on the other. When a Pathan, Ahtahzai or Kakar or what he may be, has worked himself to the murder pitch with *bhag* and prayer, he takes provisions and a knife to stroll into Quetta. Days or weeks he may be on the road. These *ghazis*, solitary or in pairs, have no such distinctive sign as the mirror and white robe carried by their fellows when forming part of an army. They go along like harmless travellers until the chance comes to hand. Then a sudden shout, "The merciful God is one!" a spring, and the knife is sheathed in a Kaffir's body! But the *ghazi* will wait for a sure stroke, unless hunger drives him into rashness. His life is devoted to the faith; he will not escape, nor scarcely resist, but he will not fail if he can help it. In a case last year it was proved that the assassin had been many weeks hanging about the town. He had fallen ill before the chance came; had asked for and obtained attendance gratis at the Dispensary, and when cured had returned to his holy task. To me there is something that fascinates, whilst it shocks and disgusts, in the Pathan character. It may be admitted that I have some experience of savage life, and this I say, with such authority as will be allowed me, that in strength of will and tenacity of purpose the Afghan has no peer. His intelligence, courage, and enterprise nobody disputes, and I shall be very greatly surprised if the new system resulting from this war does not make the Pathan a very important factor in our Indian problem.

The night was dark, and oh, so cold! The rugged mulberry trunks shone redly and vanished, as the lantern swung. Overhead gnarled boughs made a network like twisted cordage. High on our right, dimly threatening through the haze, the fort of Quetta loomed. At each few yards an ice-bound water-course must be leapt, for this valley, like that of Candahar, abounds in streams. Muffled strangers met us in the dark, with or without a lantern. I was warned to give such a cautious offing, until the common password had been exchanged. On this night, with so much movement between distant camps, it had been thought impossible to give a countersign, but "A merry Christmas!" was more pleasant and equally effective.

After a devious stumble—for Lister took short cuts—we reached the mess-room. There were four members, I think, in ordinary times, for the regiments of the garrison messed in the fort, of course. And for these the little whitewashed chamber sufficed. But each had four guests, and each guest a servant or two. What a heat it was, what a squeeze, what jollity! Most had come provided with the thick felt overalls, drawing above boot and thigh, so needful for long sitting in that bitter climate, when a sheet of canvas only excludes the Arctic cold. Several had that woollen headdress called, I believe, a *cantope*, which covers forehead, chin, and shoulders like an ancient helmet. But sheepskins and the rest were promptly discarded, and we perspired in our jackets. It was a mighty pleasant meal all the same. To-morrow the most of us were starting for unknown adventures in a country traditional for danger. That thought for the future gives zest to present mirth, and makes light of small disappointments. The turkey was uneatable, the beef an evil jest, the fresh vegetables from Lister's garden, preserved for this great event, roused mockery in the most forbearing. But Hobday told us stories, and Riley laughed like one possessed; somebody sang a song, a new and a good one. So the Christmas night passed merrily, and at half-past eleven we went homewards. The glass marked three degrees below zero.

To end the evening fittingly, as we sat by the fire in his bungalow, Lister told me a few anecdotes from the record of murder compiled in our eighteen months of occupation. They were better than ghost stories, more dramatic, almost incredible, but too true. The day following we all went our ways: mine led me through Candahar to Khelat-i-Ghilzai; back through Quetta, Jacobabad, Lahore, and the Khyber, to Safed Sang; and so, after nine months' absence, home again. Lister was attached, with two guns, to Major Sandeman's escort, and I presume he returned to India by Tul and Chotiali.

Such are the strangest of the Christmas Days I have passed as yet. In a few years more I may publish a supplement. But the pitcher, as you see, has been often to the well.

CHILDREN OF LARGER GROWTH.

By ARTHUR CECIL.

ARE we at school again? It looks very like it. The class certainly seems to consist of rather advanced pupils, and the master who is hearing our lesson bears not the faintest resemblance either to the Dr. Busby of fact, or the Dr. Blimber of fiction; but here we stand, just as we did in the old days, in a sort of semicircle on an uncarpeted floor, to repeat something we have learnt, or *ought* to have learnt, by heart. Every now and then we change positions in the class much as we did of yore, when we used to illustrate the theory of life's ups and downs by taking or losing so many places.

Our behaviour, I regret to say, is occasionally as listless as it was at "the Doctor's," our attention is almost as apt to wander, and from time to time we make mistakes which are duly corrected by the superior authority, and often in a tone not very unlike that in which we were once accustomed to hear an imposition set of fifty or a hundred lines to be learnt by heart. Yet, strange to say, in this school an extra fifty or hundred lines to learn by heart is by no means a punishment, but rather a source of satisfaction to the pupil, as tending to increase the importance of his position in the establishment. Indeed, it is one of the oddest contradictions of the place that the inmates are constantly grumbling at the amount of time and pains they have to devote to their work; but if the master ventures to suggest that the length of the task shall be reduced by so much as a line, the learner is far more likely to be annoyed than pleased at the suggestion.

No doubt this state of things is to be accounted for by the influence of that healthy spirit of emulation which should exist in all schools. In ours its existence is the more remarkable, seeing that although it has a substantial object, there being a distribution of prizes every week, yet it is the custom of the establishment to give the "reward of merit," as it is called, to each individual in the place, whether that individual's work has been well or ill done.

Besides the weekly award of prizes there are exhibitions every day, or rather every night, for it is even more a night school than a day school. It also numbers a few "borders," and these, to their credit be it said, are always high up.

At the exhibitions the pupils are subjected to a public examination, and commended or censured as the case may be. The censure has been sometimes known to take a substantial form, such as a carrot, a turnip, an orange peel, or an egg, this last generally in a more or less decayed condition. Success is often stamped by the feet, as well as applauded by the hands of the public, whose favourite motto on these occasions is "Palman qui meruit ferat."

A liberal and enlightened system seems to obtain in the school, for the pupils are of both sexes, and no very severe restrictions are imposed upon the terms of their intercourse. Endear-

ing epithets fly about in all directions, and no stronger proof can be adduced of the good feeling that, as a rule, prevails in the establishment, than the fact that whenever a pupil unfortunately comes to grief, some one is almost invariably found ready to take his or her part.

I have lately read a good deal of newspaper correspondence on the subject of the feeding at schools, and in this respect it must be confessed that the establishment under consideration makes no better show than its neighbours, if, indeed, its pupils do not fare even worse than their contemporaries elsewhere. I noticed certainly that in one respect our appetites, since the days of my youth, have undergone a very peculiar change, for whereas in former times we used to be unreasonably particular about our meat being lean, and daintily rejected every morsel that was not so, we now exhibit a perpetual craving for "fat." We cannot have too much of it, the more we can get the better are we pleased. For the rest, the diet is far from satisfactory, and yet, strange to say, complaints on the subject of it are unknown. Raised pies make a brave appearance on the festive board, whose crusts are of a material so hard and indigestible as to suggest pasteboard rather than paste, and instead of meat contain at most but a few bits of bread, whilst a roast chicken, fair to the eye when seen at a distance, is invariably found, on close inspection, to consist of a stale French roll deftly cut into the shape of a fowl's carcass, and flanked by additional bits of crust to do duty for wings. Whatever these wings have about them of an ornithological character belongs, curiously enough, rather to the *canvas back* than the domestic order of fowl, but this probably accounts for the high esteem in which they are held by the pupils who, indeed, are always "at the wings."

It is, however, to be regretted that the imposing effect thus sought to be attained, and often successfully, by the most economical means, should involve a system of unreality of which the demoralising tendency may be best estimated from the fact that a traditional belief actually exists in the academy that such shams as I have mentioned look more genuine than the things they are intended to imitate.

As with the cakes, so with the beverages. That which should be the finest sherry is scarcely so "fine" as "curious," being, indeed, but toast-and-water, for want of something still less expensive to grace the banquet. It is not easy to imagine any fluid much less costly to manufacture than toast-and-water, and such is the spirit of economy pervading the place, and so strong the belief in the artificial, that I feel sure, if it were necessary to represent toast-and-water in this establishment it would be found to be susceptible of imitation by something else still cheaper.

But to return to the class, out of which I have now slipped and am sitting quietly in the background waiting the moment when I shall be called upon to rejoin it. The master in command of it bears more resemblance, perhaps, to the writing-master of our youth than to any other school-assistant, nor is he much more self-assertive than that generally ill-used and little-headed functionary. Indeed it is easy to see that he is not the principal but only an usher. In his official capacity we are prompted to pay him a certain amount of deference, but presently, when school breaks up, we shall shake off his yoke entirely. Who is the mysterious boy at his beck and call? Is he a monitor or a fag? He rushes to and fro, he summons us by name as our presence is needed, and, but for the absence of the orthodox three rows of buttons, his ubiquity and activity might stamp him as a page.

Presently enters a pupil for whom the class had so long been kept waiting that it was eventually decided to begin without him. He is not a dunce, but only a victim of unpunctuality. He apologises for his lateness, offering about as valid an excuse as he used to make under similar circumstances in the days of his youth, an excuse which throws the blame on his watch, or his means of conveyance to the school, or the state of his health for the time being, or any cause in short but the true one, whatever that may be, and the excuse is accepted with about the same show of belief as usual. He is enjoined not to let the irregularity occur again, and the class is put back on his account to some passage that should have been gone over before had he been present, a penalty on the rest of the pupils which elicits from them grumbling, both loud and deep.

"Less noise there, if you please," says the usher to a knot of chatters who have finished their work for the present, and are laughing, school-boy fashion, among themselves to the annoyance of the group whose turn it will be to be heard next, and who are still busy committing their task to memory. There they sit, these last, hard at work, with hands covering the pages of whose contents they are trying to test their recollection, their eyes raised with a sort of entranced expression, and their lips moving in rapid whispers, whilst the group that has been suddenly called to order becomes preternaturally quiet. Really that boy who appears to be the ringleader might have known better than to make such a noise. I am sure he is old enough; he is quite fat, and getting bald; whilst his cheeks present a blueness of aspect indicating that the razor, that highest desideratum of the schoolboy, must have passed over them for more than half as many years as have passed over his head.

Can I believe my eyes, or is the class actually going to take a lesson in the Terpsichorean art? Well, why not? It is an art that is taught at most schools. Yes, sure enough, the usher has given place to a dancing-master, attended, as I remember that sort of gentleman is always attended, by a man with a fiddle—only this one appears hardly so dignified or striking in the matter of deportment as the instructor of my youth. He does not seem to inspire a great deal of awe in the men, and treats the ladies with something too much of familiarity, addressing them usually as "My darling"; and this in the presence of the head-master, who has just arrived in pursuance of his usual custom of hearing "repetitions."

But the head-master exhibits no signs of disapproval, and the pupils—dear me! they seem more advanced than ever. There is nothing retiring about them now. Into the dance they go, with a vigour and animation delightful to see. No threading of Lancers this, or walking through quadrilles, but fun fast and furious. The ladies are as active as the gentlemen, and arms, legs, and feet are at work in every direction, while the music grows quicker and quicker. At last the dance is at an end, and breathless and exhausted each dancer sinks on the nearest place that affords sitting accommodation.

"That will do for to-day," says the voice of the head-master. "Everybody at eleven to-morrow, and without books."

Without books! Why, of course; what need to read or to print the poetry of motion?

One by one the pupils slip away, and I wake from a sort of day dream to the recollection that I am in the Royal Polytechnic Theatre, where we have been rehearsing our new burlesque of *The Lady of Lyons—Pretty Pauline; or, Colonel Claude and the Widdy, the Willain, and the Weteran*.

The fact is, that I have been reading so much in the papers lately about the want of a school for actors that no wonder I get bewildered on the subject of my academical and theatrical experiences; and, being struck with so many points of resemblance between them, mixed up the present with the past.

THE HARBOUR-MASTER'S REVENGE.

By J. ASHBY-STERRY,

Author of “Shuttlecock Papers,” “Boudoir Ballads,” “Tiny Travels,” &c.

WHEN it was announced that Their Serene Highnesses the Grand Duke and Duchess of Schlingenschlangenburg had determined to land at Scupperton, the excitement throughout the township was tremendous.

Scupperton, I should tell you, was one immense bump of veneration—I might almost call it a *goitre* of reverence—from the bottom of its deepest well to the vane of its highest church steeple. A man with a handle to his name found that handle would do him a good turn, and a bigwig had no idea he was nearly so large till he paid our town a visit. We did not have many people of distinction land at our port, for, to tell the truth, the port, as a port, was something of a failure. There was an unreasonable, senseless shoal, which was always doing something it ought not to do; it was either shifting, or silting up, or conducting itself in some preposterous fashion. There was an awkward set of the tide at certain seasons which took the jetty at a wrong angle, and made it impossible for any ship entering the harbour to do so without knocking its bowsprit against the jetty or the pier, and sometimes cannoning off the one on to the other. Indeed it was in consequence of our wrecking a Royal yacht, and very nearly drowning a Royal duke, that led to the project of making Scupperton into a station for mail boats being for the time abandoned.

A great many heavy blocks of granite and a deal of money had been sunk in the making of this jetty. There was scarcely a person of note in the town but had some of his spare cash invested beneath low-water mark in the new scheme, and there were not a few whose capital was so securely locked up in the undertaking that they had left their native town until something should be done to control the gambols of the unreasonable shoal, in order that some prospect of a dividend might be forthcoming. Meantime, the jetty itself was by no means neglected; there were labourers working there most days in a lazy sort of way, except when the tide or the weather interfered with them, which was pretty often, and then they elected to pass the rest of the day in trolling choruses and drinking beer at the “Jocund Jelly Fish.” Sometimes the directors and the engineers and the contractors would come down “on survey,” and they would walk solemnly along the granite wall, and tap it with their sticks, and shake their heads. They would then have luncheon at the “Sapphire Arms”; subsequently they would go out in boats, and take soundings; and eventually they would return to the aforesaid hostelry, and dine well—at the expense of the company—and, according to post-prandial speeches, the undertaking was in a most prosperous condition. It was generally agreed that if the shoal could be kept in order, if the Elder Brethren of the Trinity Board could be squared, and the Post Office authorities could be made to see things in a proper light, a branch line of rail of four miles from Tuffborough (the nearest railway station) would be constructed and carried to the end of the pier, and the fortune both of the company and the town would be made.

Inside the old pier was a very fair harbour, which was good enough before the days of steam, and in the time of the old sailing packets the town of Scupperton was prosperous enough, and it was only the circumstance of the threatened silting up of the entrance channel, and the railway being made direct to Blusterham, that caused its present state of decadence. There was no doubt about it, the place was gradually deteriorating. Large warehouses along the quay were untenanted, one hotel was shut up, although it had a large board outside it, stating that it would “shortly be re-opened with every improvement, under a manager of great experience, appointed by the Jetty Company.” There was a large space of ground which was surrounded by palisading and inscribed “Site of the Scupperton Aquarium and Winter Garden.” There was a row of houses unfinished, and there was a suburb marked out as South Scupperton, which was advertised as to be let on building leases, but was, in reality, hired as grazing ground for sheep by Mr. Bleether, the butcher. There were, however, good sands, a fine air, and a pretty country around Scupperton; so those people who did not mind travelling by a slow train to Tuffborough—the railway authorities were very awkward and would not allow any express train to stop there—and a four miles drive afterwards, came, year after year, to the place, and liked it very much. If you did not object to the trouble of getting there it was a most delightful place, but in the present day everyone likes to get everywhere without any trouble at all. And so Scupperton suffered.

There was plenty of public spirit in the place, and the advent of the Grand Duke and Duchess of Schlingenschlangenburg served to set it aflame. The Duke was greatly interested in all seafaring matters; he was very fond of yachting, and it was looked upon as a favourable omen, his selecting Scupperton as his landing place instead of Blusterham, which would have shortened his journey to London by a couple of hours. Evidently this honour must be turned to account, and the petty jealousies, the squabbles of vestries and local boards, the exclusiveness of cliques, the questions of precedence, and the wranglings of officials were lost sight of in the one common cause of the welfare of the township. The *Scupperton Sentinel* came out strong on the subject of the pedigree of the Schlingenschlangenburg family, and its description of the palatial grandeur of the Schloss Schlingenschlangenburg reflected the greatest credit on the talent for romance evinced by the editor. The *Tuffborough Times*, still sore on the subject of slow trains, after stating that a “special” would be in waiting to convey Their Serene Highnesses to town, took occasion to indite a leader on the subject, expressing a hope that the town would be “no longer snubbed by the slow trains of a directorial despotism.” Nobody knew exactly what this meant, but it sounded well, and everybody was very much delighted.

The Mayor of Scupperton—“little Figgy,” as the irreverent called him who bought groceries at his shop in the High-street—Ferdinand Figgeram, Esquire, as his wife wished him to be called, convened a public meeting at the Town Hall. One alderman, who was a glazier, proposed that a royal salute should be fired, and another glazier, who was not an alderman, seconded the proposition. It was on the point of being carried when an alderman, who was a nurseryman, stated that the last time such a thing was done a gun burst, two men were blown into the sea, he had about an acre of glass smashed, and most of the windows in the town were broken, and “he’d be grafted if he didn’t see the Duke of Schlingenschlangenburg overlastingly bedded out, afore he’d agree to such a thing.” The irate nurseryman was promptly called to order, and the matter was ordered to be referred to the Truck Committee, an ancient and mysterious corporation which undertook everything and accomplished nothing. The meeting was well attended, however, by all classes. Even Earl Dogge de Manger, known to be the stingiest nobleman in existence, showed his Roman nose on the platform, said a few words that nobody could hear, which were vociferously applauded, and contributed his guinea towards the expenses.

Rear Admiral Sir Garboard Streakley, K.C.B., chairman of the Jetty Company, made a brilliant speech, and said the company had determined to subscribe twenty guineas to this most important reception. This was received with enthusiastic cheering, and a couple of pallid shareholders, who objected, and wished to ask questions, were unceremoniously kicked into the street. Colonel Clabberdash, of the 18th Slashers, stationed at Tuffborough, offered the services of the admirable band of the regiment. Arrangements were made for the erection of a pavilion at the end of the jetty, to be beautifully carpeted and decorated with flowers and flags. Then Their Serene Highnesses were to be received by the Mayor and Corporation, the address would be read by the Town-clerk, a bouquet would be presented by the Mayor’s daughter, other young girls would strew flowers as the Duke and Duchess walked to the carriage. They were then to drive slowly, accompanied by the Mayor and Mayoress, the whole length of the jetty, and when they reached the quay they were to trot briskly off to Tuffborough station, where the special train would await them.

The harbour-master was present, and was consulted in his official capacity, and he had a good deal to say with regard to the tides and the state of the weather, anchorage, and so forth. His opinions were listened to with deference, for his power was absolute as regarded the shipping and the harbour. He was infinitely more of an autocrat in his own department than the mayor was in his. The mayor, it is true, might and did originate and carry a great many projects of various kinds, but before they were perfected they had to be discussed by the aldermen, talked over by the councillors, and canvassed by the Truck Committee. Whereas if the harbour-master refused to allow a vessel anchorage within his domain, it was obliged to pass on; and if he said a ship was to discharge its cargo at a particular quay, there it had to be unloaded. This official, however, used his authority judiciously, and was very popular. He had been a captain in the navy, which he left on account of a serious illness, and on his recovery obtained the post of harbour-master to Scupperton. It was about a year after his appointment that he married pretty little Miss Dimpleton, a young lady of excellent family, but who by reason of serious pecuniary losses was, at the time he met her, bravely earning her own living as a teacher of music and drawing to some of the best families in the town. The Sparkles were not rich, but they were very happy. They lived in that old-fashioned rose-covered cottage on the Tuffborough-road. They had two lovely little girls of six and eight, and it would be difficult to find a couple more popular throughout the neighbourhood than Sam Sparkles and his wife.

They had one terrible fault in the eyes of some people. They were poor, and they committed the still greater crime of not being ashamed of it. This was, in the opinion of the Figgerams, the Mumpundies, the Snawkworthies, and such like, unpardonable. Little Figgy could never understand how it was that Earl Dogge de Manger, Sir Garboard Streakley, Squire Sapphire, and others of the best class would call upon Sparkles and smoke a cigar with him, when they refused to recognise Ferdinand Figgeram, save in his official capacity. When Mrs. Figgeram heard of some of the young officers from Tuffborough, dropping in occasionally at Binnacle Cottage, she shook her head and looked half-a-dozen libels in the way that only a spiteful and disappointed woman can accomplish. She hated bonny little Syl Sparkles, for when that lady was a governess, Mrs. Figgeram insulted her. Syl gave her a bit of her mind, absolutely refused to teach her children for any monetary consideration whatever, and declined to know her from that time forth.

And so all the mischief came about. The tickets for the pavilion on this most important occasion were at a premium. Everybody in the town was fighting for them, intriguing for them, and doing all sorts of mean things to get them. Of course the number was limited, and the mayor’s wife naturally had a good deal to do with their selection. Applications were sent in for about four times the number that the place would hold, and these had to be sifted down and weeded out. When the important people of the neighbourhood and the mayor’s friends were provided for, there were but very few tickets left. Captain Sparkles applied for a ticket for his wife, and it would have been sent, but Mrs. Figgeram told her husband she would not be present if Mrs. Sparkles was there. “A ’aughty little piece of goods as ever I saw, who wouldn’t look at me when we met at Larripit’s Library the other day. There are some majors’ wives, and consuls’ wives, and Customs’ wives, that I meet, that I don’t think much of, but you must draw your line somewhere, F., and I draws it at a ’arbour-master’s wife.” So it came to pass that Mrs. Sparkles did not get her ticket for the pavilion. She laughed over it, and it did not trouble her much, but it made Sam very savage indeed.

Everyone was nervous about the weather, for there was no knowing what that disorderly shoal would do if it happened to be rough. It, however, turned out a lovely day, the sunshine was brilliant, and the sea was as calm as a duck-pond. The jetty was magnificent, and the town was decorated with flags from one end to the other. We are told that Todgers’ could do it when it pleased, and I am certain when Scupperton gave its mind to a thing it would not be a whit behind the famous hostelry in question. I feel certain Todgers’ never came out so strong in gravity in the whole period of its existence as our town did in bunting. There was, however, so little breeze that the flags scarcely fluttered at all. There was only one mast that remained undecorated, and that was the signal-post on the old pier.

Long before the steamer was signalled every one had taken their seats in the pavilion. It was crammed; and uncommonly well it looked with its scarlet cloth, its flowers, and its gay toilettes. There was the Mayor in his murrey-coloured robe, his antique medal and chain of office. There were the Aldermen in their odd-looking fur trimmed gowns; there was the Town Clerk in the quaint cap belonging to this ancient borough; there was our member, Sir Tittumy Taughter and his wife; there was Miss Fanny Figgeram in a very short muslin frock, with her hair down her back, and a gigantic bouquet in her hand; there were a dozen other young ladies with their hair down their backs and also in very short frocks, and baskets of flowers on their arms. Mamas whose daughters were not in this select company shook their heads and said, “Well, if ever I’d let a daughter of mine make an exhibition of herself.” “Dressed almost like a ballet girl, and on a public pier, too.” “Fanny Figgeram is no baby, I can tell you.” Mrs. Figgeram was in splendid raiment; she was perpetually “my lording” Earl Dogge de Manger, who looked at her superciliously from under his hat brim and wagged his Roman nose at her from time to time. The jetty officials had on bran new uniforms, and the band “by kind permission of Colonel Clabberdash and the officers of the 18th Slashers,” was discoursing charming music, while awaiting the arrival of the distinguished visitors.

The old pier was of course too distant to see anything with satisfaction, so there was nobody upon it but a few officials. Stay. I am making a mistake; just after the band began playing a one horse fly, containing Mrs. Sparkles and her two bonny children drove up. She was exquisitely dressed and the little girls’ toilettes were faultless. She ensconced herself in a comfortable corner, put up her sunshade and began to read “Bound to Win,” as if there was nothing more than usual to

agitate the serenity of Scupperton Harbour. Mrs. Figgeram saw her through an opera-glass, and leant across and whispered to her bosom friend, Mrs. Mumpundy. Whereupon the pair exchanged looks which were clearly actionable. Subsequently, Dolly Draffer, a good-natured subaltern from Tuffborough, said to a brother officer, Jack Simmery, “By Jove. Don’t you know. Look there, there’s Mrs. Sparkles, all by herself over there. Why hasn’t she a ticket? Let’s go over and see her. This place is infernally hot. And I don’t care about the Duke of—Crackjawborough, or whatever his confounded name is. Do you?” And the pair hailed a boat and were ferried over to the old pier. Whereupon Mrs. Figgeram and Mrs. Mumpundy again looked libel; they also looked slander and defamation of character, and they wafted anything but blessings and good wishes in the wake of the boat occupied by the two good-natured soldiers.

All this time the Puffandblow had been gradually getting nearer. It had grown from a cloud of smoke in the horizon to a toy ship in the middle distance, and now it became a tangible steamer. You could make out every line of its rigging in the clear atmosphere, and you could hear the beat of its paddles and the flutter of the water, so still and calm was the ocean. Opera glasses were steadily focussed on the coming ship, and big nautical telescopes were brought to bear on its passengers. Knowing ones averred they could see the Grand Duke on the paddle-box, others said it was only the captain in his best uniform. Captain Boanerges Bilgewater, the head of the Coast Guard, and Mr. Councillor Snawkworthy came to high words on the subject, and if Archdeacon Portley Kewer had not interfered, I verily believe the telescope of the irascible captain would have been laid about the head of the contumacious councillor.

When the Puffandblow was within hailing distance a single four-pounder was fired from the end of the jetty. Mr. Alderman Nurseryman had gained his point after all—and this was the signal for everything to be in readiness. The band at once struck up “See the Conquering Hero Comes,” the Mayor cleared his throat, the policemen cleared the gangway, the Town Clerk adjusted his glasses and mumbled over the beginning of the address for the fortieth time, the Aldermen, the Truck Committee, and the rest of the officials advanced to the head of the red-clothed steps, Fanny Figgeram was fidgetting with her white satin slipper, which had come down at heel, and the twelve young ladies in muslin frocks were being arranged, smoothed out and slapped into shape by as many of their mammams as could get at them.

The jetty-men were ready at the landing-stage, with ropes, and fenders; the deputy harbour-master was there with a speaking-trumpet prepared to shout—they did nothing without shouting at Scupperton—and the Puffandblow majestically rounded the head of the jetty and steered straight for Mrs. Figgeram. The excitement was immense, people cheered like mad. Yes, there was the Grand Duke, and there was the Grand Duchess—every one knew them from the photographs at Larripit’s Library—the Grand Duke was waving his hat. Mrs. Figgeram acknowledged the salute with such vehemence that she very nearly nodded the ostrich feathers off her bonnet. It was, indeed, a moment of triumph for this good lady. She had a sort of confused idea that she would be invested with some foreign Order of Merit, and that her husband would become Sir Ferdinand Figgeram, K.C.B. She waved her pocket handkerchief with more enthusiasm than grace. It was a moment of intense exultation.

Suddenly the Puffandblow, which had been steering direct for the red cloth and the Mayor and Corporation, altered its course, the captain was seen waving his hand violently. “Starboard! Hard-a-starboard!” was shouted, and “Star-b-o-o-rd! Hard-a-star-b-o-o-rd!” was echoed by the man at the wheel. Her head swung round, and she made for the harbour. Every one’s glance was directed to the flag-post on the old pier. They saw Captain Sparkles carefully belaying the signal halyards, and following the halyards to the mast-head, they saw the red ensign with the swallow-tailed burgee above it, which was the signal that the steamer should land at the old pier. And worse than all they saw the Puffandblow slowly steam alongside it. They saw the hawsers made fast, the gangway run out, and heard the steam begin to blow off.

Mrs. Figgeram nearly had a fit, the Mayor sat on his hat, the Town Clerk dropped his spectacles into the water, Sir Garboard Streakley made use of expressions more nautical than polite, Earl Dogge de Manger looked more like a hawk out of employment than ever, and Captain Bilgewater seized the opportunity for treading on the gouty foot of Mr. Councillor Snawkworthy. All the time the band kept on playing merrily, as if it were the very best fun in the world. What was to be done? There was nothing to be done. They could not go across, as all the boats had been removed, and it was at least two miles round to the old pier. Besides a flying stampede of the Mayor and Corporation, followed by all the notabilities of the town, the length of the jetty, would have been anything but dignified. They had nothing to do but to wait and look. And this was what took place.

Captain Sparkles went on board and interviewed their Serene Highnesses the Grand Duke and Duchess, and explained that owing to a change in the wind it was hardly deemed safe to allow the steamer to go alongside the new jetty, that everyone much regretted that the usual honours and the customary address could not be presented, and that the carriage expressly set apart for their Serene Highnesses was round at the jetty. The Duke, who was an excellent fellow, said it did not matter a bit; the Duchess was somewhat tired, and they both looked upon the whole thing as a bore, they were anxious to get to town as quickly as possible, as they were engaged to dine out that evening. At the top of the gangway they were received by Mrs. Sparkles, who addressed them in appropriate words of welcome, spoken in faultless German, and led forward her two little daughters, who each presented a modest bunch of violets to the Duchess. The Duchess was delighted, and she kissed the golden-haired little damsels enthusiastically. Mrs. Figgeram, who saw all this from the jetty, could have killed the children on the spot. What she saw further nearly made her faint. She saw the Duke and Duchess get into the one-horse landau—yes, positively into what she called “the one-horse shandydan,” from Blottermys’ livery stables—the one that had brought Mrs. Sparkles and her children—there was some little parley, kind-hearted Dolly Draffer and Jack Simmery took charge of the little girls, and then, O horror, she saw Mrs. Sparkles and Captain Sparkles get into the fly, and Blottermys’ man drive off with a dash and a dignity that he had never accomplished since the time he was coachman to Lord Toddlad. The harbour-master and his wife accompanied the distinguished visitors to the station; they saw them safely start for London, and in the evening there was a very merry party at Binnacle Cottage.

When Mrs. Figgeram read in the *Scupperton Sentinel* some weeks after, that Mrs. Sparkles had “received a valuable bracelet, with a suitable inscription, from the Grand Duke and Duchess of Schlingenschlangenburg, as an acknowledgment of her courtesy during their recent visit,” I think you will allow there was nothing wanting to complete “THE HARBOUR-MASTER’S REVENGE.”



MOTHER'S DARLING.



A. G. Street del. & c.

THE VEILED PICTURE.

BY WILLIAM YARDLEY.

I HAVE a friend an artist; in fact, I believe I may congratulate myself on having several friends who are artists. But I mean one in particular. He is, perhaps, my most intimate friend. I see him, on the average, daily—that is to say, we meet about three hundred and sixty-five times from January to December. Quite three hundred times in the course of the year I see him at his studio. Consequently, I am tolerably well acquainted with the contents of the room, and noticeable among them is a *veiled picture*. For quite two years have I religiously kept up the above-mentioned average of visits to the studio in question. My friend the artist had shown me, over and over again, every single thing, I believe, without exception, in his studio—except the *veiled picture*. For two years, at the rate of three hundred times per annum, had I asked him to allow me to see what was behind the veil; for two years, at the same rate, had he made the same answer, "Not now, old chap; I will show it to you some day soon, and tell you all about it." The sigh that accompanied that stereotyped speech always prevented me from pressing the matter further. I felt that there was something mysterious behind that veil, and I at length made up my mind to allude to it no more. On the next visit I paid to my friend's house after I had made this resolution, whether from the natural contrariness of human nature or from whatever other cause I don't pretend to say, he suddenly said, "You want to see what is behind that veil—I will show you—but don't be disappointed." So saying, he removed the veil, and I am free to confess that a feeling of something like disappointment came upon me for a moment. I saw a sketch—for it cannot be honestly called anything more than a sketch—of what appeared to me, at the first sight, a decidedly pretty, but by no means interesting, face of a young girl, apparently about nineteen years of age. My long pent-up curiosity to see, however, caused me to examine the picture more intently than I otherwise probably should, and the result was that the more I gazed upon it the more it interested me. There was a certain eager and wistful, but, at the same time, mournful expression about the eyes, that after a few seconds fairly held me spell-bound. I can't attempt to describe the face that was before me any more than I could attempt to reproduce it on canvas. At the end of five minutes' scrutiny I ventured the remark that it was the best work of art, in my humble opinion, I had as yet seen produced by my friend's brush. I was somewhat astonished by the almost feverish eagerness with which he replied, "Do you really mean it? I am delighted to hear you say so, for although I know as well as you do yourself that your opinion about art of any sort is of no value whatever, yet, oddly enough, I do somehow value your opinion about that particular sketch immensely. Why, I can't tell. I can only say that you are the only living being that I have ever permitted to see that sketch, except those for whom I painted a picture from it."

Having thus salved over, by the latter part of his speech, any little wound he might have made on my vanity by the earlier portion of it, he proceeded—

"If you care to hear what I have to tell about that sketch, I will now carry out the promise I have so often made to you; but I must only ask you not to comment upon it, though of course you are at liberty to believe or disbelieve my little story as you please."

So saying, when we had both lighted our pipes, he told me the following singular story, which I reproduce in, as nearly as I can remember, the words in which it was told to me:—

"Two years ago, as nearly as possible, you will remember, I was very much down on my luck. For six years I had had the satisfaction of seeing all my efforts on canvas that I had sent in, hung at the Academy; once I was hung on the line. Not only that, but I had succeeded in realising what seemed to me large prices for my pictures, and had had my hands satisfactorily full of commissions for portraits. But for some reason, at the time to which I am particularly alluding, nothing seemed to go right with me. My pictures were rejected at the Academy, commissions for portraits seemed to be things of the past, and, in fact, I should have been altogether in Queer-street if I had not by some lucky accident happened to put by a portion of my former gains in my profession for a rainy day—not my usual custom, as you know well enough. I had fortunately, however, succeeded in obtaining and keeping the good graces of such of the leaders of my profession as fortune had brought me in contact with, and, to keep matters as short as possible, one day when I was sitting in this very chair as I am now at this moment, smoking my pipe and seriously contemplating the advisability and the feasibility of giving up the profession of an artist, who should walk in but Q—. You know Q—, he is an R.A., and, still more, a fashionable R.A., whose word in the artistic world is law, amongst most, at all events, who affect Art. I was, I must confess, astonished to see him, for although he had always been kind to me when I met him elsewhere, yet he had never deigned to set foot in my humble studio before. Any ideas that I may momentarily have had that he had come to look at my work and give me the valuable assistance of his advice were immediately dispelled by the first words he uttered on arriving.

"Hullo, young man" (you know his bluff manner, which seems so stern till you know the man well), "idling? That's not the way to get on in your profession."

"I was about to stammer out some sort of an explanation, when he cut me short by continuing immediately,

"However, I haven't come here to pitch into you; I haven't time. I must be off in two minutes. Fact is, I've been asked to recommend an artist for a very peculiar job. The job is so peculiar, indeed, that I don't know anyone who can hope to succeed with it, but as a very handsome sum is guaranteed from an undeniable source for the attempt, I thought it might suit you, knowing you were a bit down on your luck just now. Anyway, you will have the consolation, if you fail—that is presuming you undertake the commission—of knowing that it is only what is expected of you. What is wanted of you is to make an interesting experiment enough, namely, to endeavour to produce a likeness of a certain person from the description given to you of that certain person, by certain other persons. Don't know if you follow me, but I can't help it if you don't, I'm in a hurry, and you must decide at once, yes or no, as if you don't undertake it I must find some one who will within the next two hours."

"I began to say that I should like to know a few further particulars, but was again interrupted:

"If you will undertake the commission you must set off within a few hours to——Station in Blankshire. Here's the address. What do you say? Yes or no? I advise you to say yes!"

"Well," I said, "I will take your advice and do my best." "Quite right," said Q—, "who does his best does all," though I hope your all will be more than I expect. Good-bye, I must be off. I may depend upon your starting at once, may I? That's all right. I know I can trust you. Here's the address and all necessary particulars."

"Saying which Q— departed as suddenly as he came, and

left me in a state of utter bewilderment, with a slip of paper which he had thrust into my hand as he left. Well, not to bore you with more details than are necessary, I packed up such traps as I thought I might require, looked out in Bradshaw the station mentioned on the slip of paper left by Q—, and took my place in the train specified. I always travel first-class, if I can scrape together the wherewithal, and as I had that, and the prospect of a handsome *douceur* for what I considered the 'wild goose chase' on which I was bound, I also feed the guard very liberally to give me his solemn promise not to allow anybody, under any pretence whatever, to get into my compartment, which I need hardly say was for smokers. In answer to my selfish request he promised faithfully to allow no one else to get into the same compartment with me. I had to travel by rail for about four hours, my final destination being some three miles drive from the station at which I was to get out; so I calculated on arriving in just about comfortable time to dress for dinner. I spent my time when fairly started on the journey in thinking over the task I had undertaken.

"The more I thought of it the more I was puzzled as to its practicability. To paint a portrait of some one from a description of that some one given to you by some one else. It sounded like a conundrum. I won't afflict you with all the thoughts that came into my head on the subject, but I could think of nothing else. I must have fallen into a doze over my thoughts and my pipe, for I remember distinctly being aroused by the jerk of the train as we were leaving a station within about two hours of our departure from London, as I gathered from looking at my watch. I had just lighted my pipe again without moving from the recumbent position I had adopted during my snooze, when I chanced to look to the other end of the carriage, and to my intense astonishment I found that I was not the only occupant. 'Confound that guard!' I muttered to myself; 'I might have known that halfpenny was as good as thrown in the gutter.' I proceeded at once, as every Englishman similarly situated does, to take stock of my *compagnon de voyage*, and I found, to increase my natural irritation, caused by the (as I considered) impertinent intrusion, that insult was added to injury by the fact that the intruder was a female. She looked like a lady, there was no doubt of that, but what business had she in my carriage, the more particularly as it was a smoking carriage? I was on the point of putting my pipe into my pocket, it having been completely put out by what I considered this *contretemps* (so ungallant are all English travellers), when I was accosted in a sweet silvery voice by my fellow-traveller, who 'hoped I wouldn't lose the pleasure of smoking on her account, as she hadn't the least objection to it.' Well, what could I do under the circumstances but re-light my pipe once more, after a stammered apologetic something—and smoke, in silence, of course?

After about five minutes' awkward silence (it seemed to me five months) the young lady took me quite aback by stating that she saw I was an artist, a fact which considerably astonished me for the moment, until I remembered that some of my *paraphernalia*, which I had in the carriage with me, pointed unmistakably to that conclusion. Well, to cut matters as short as possible, we drifted into conversation on general subjects first of all, full as I was still of the thoughts that filled my mind as to the peculiar errand on which I was bent. Suddenly, I fairly gasped for breath when the young lady curtly propounded the following question to me—

"Do you think it possible, sir, for anyone to make a faithful portrait from description?"

"I never have been able to remember at all connectedly the long conversation which ensued upon the topic of all others that was most prominent in my thoughts; all I do remember is that I arrived at the conclusion, which I stated as clearly as I could, that there must be some marked peculiarity about the 'subject' to be described which might be the fortunate means of enabling the artist engaged on such a peculiar undertaking to produce a picture something resembling the hoped-for likeness. The young lady, who seemed most enthusiastic upon the subject, at length brought the question to a practical issue by the following remark, which I remember as distinctly now as if she herself were speaking at this moment—

"But don't you think an artist—you yourself, for instance, would be materially assisted in the accomplishment of his task if some peculiar mark were mentioned, such as the mole which I have here on my left cheek?"

"On saying this she left the seat she had hitherto occupied at the further end of the carriage, and seating herself exactly opposite to me, pointed to a mole on her left cheek. I did not answer at the moment, not knowing, between ourselves, exactly what to say, when she continued—

"From what you have seen of me to-day, do you think you could make a satisfactory portrait of me from memory?"

"I unhesitatingly replied that as far as I was proficient in the art of portrait painting I thought I should be able to produce a tolerably satisfactory likeness of her, but that I should like to have the opportunity of seeing her again on one or two occasions, with good opportunities of studying the characteristics of her face, before I could hope to produce a really accurate likeness without actual sittings.

"With a sigh she fell back in a thoughtful attitude, and with a wistful, mournful look upon her face. I made several ineffectual attempts to enter into conversation again, and just as I was upon the point of once more, as a kind of forlorn hope, broaching the subject which engrossed me so thoroughly, and in which she had apparently with such odd coincidence taken a deep interest, the train stopped at the station at which I was to alight.

"The obsequious guard was at the door almost before the train had stopped, and was almost servile in his attentions to me. I collected my *impedimenta* as slowly as possible, hoping, for some unaccountable reason, that my travelling companion would arouse herself from the semi-lethargy into which she had fallen; but no. I occupied as much time as I decently could in alighting. There was no indication of the fair lady having taken any notice of my departure from the carriage until I was fairly on the platform, when, in response to my respectful salutation, she bowed a solemn and stately bow, with, as it seemed to me, a wistful, parting look in her eyes. Those eyes haunted me all the way to the house of my patron, Sir John —, whose carriage was at the station to meet me. I did not at the time think of mentioning his breach of promise to the guard, nor did I just then (as I do now so well) remember his look of blank astonishment, first at me, and then at the carriage I had just left, and then again at me, when I took off my hat to my fair companion on leaving her.

"I reached my destination in comfortable time to dress for dinner, but I did not see my host on my arrival, at which I was not ill-pleased, for my thoughts were still full of my curious mission, and the still more curious coincidence of my *rencontre* with a young lady in the train, who seemed inclined to talk on no other subject than the one uppermost in my thoughts.

"On descending to the drawing-room I found myself alone, but scarcely had I time to look round the room and note its comfortable surroundings, when the door opened and there entered—none else than my fair travelling-companion! My

astonishment must have been plainly depicted on my face, for she smiled (and what a sad smile it was!) as she remarked—

"You did not expect to meet me here? I knew you were coming here, but did not choose to say anything about it."

"But," I ventured to suggest, "how was it you did not leave the train at the same station as I did? Sir John's carriage was waiting for me, and brought me here."

"I have always gone to the next station, which is, if anything, rather nearer than where you alighted."

"Further conversation was cut short by the entrance of Sir John, and almost immediately afterwards of his wife. I could not help noticing that they both of them seemed subdued by an unmistakable sadness; but Sir John's face appeared to light up with a gleam of genuine pleasure when he saw me, and a shade of gladness seemed to come over his wife's face when he introduced me to her.

"The odd thing about it was that they did not introduce me to my fellow-traveller, and seemed to ignore her presence entirely. Whenever I glanced in her direction her mournful, wistful glance seemed to be always resting on me. I was about to ask for the pleasure of an introduction to the young lady when dinner was announced, and I was requested by Sir John to take her ladyship to the dining room. At the table (which was arranged as for a *parti carré*) neither Sir John nor my lady seemed to pay the least attention of my fair *incognita* as she took her seat opposite to me—nor did any of the servants think it necessary to serve her. There she sat, apparently not expecting to be helped to any of the courses, speaking to nobody, and nobody speaking to her—treated by my host and hostess and by the servants as if she were altogether a non-entity.

"I was on the point several times of addressing my conversation to her, but whenever I turned my eyes in her direction that sad, eager, wistful look always met my gaze, and for some unaccountable reason, influenced I suppose by the fact that she was ignored by every one else in the room, I seemed to lack the courage to speak to her.

"When the ladies retired, or rather when Lady—retired without any sign to her, she passed out of the room, turning upon me, as I held open the door, that same haunting look of hers. After a few moments' pause I ventured to ask Sir John who was the young lady who sat opposite to me at dinner.

"My question was received with a look of unfeigned astonishment.

"I proceeded to explain more fully that I meant the young lady who had sat opposite to me at dinner, and who, previously to our entering the dining-room, had occupied a certain peculiar chair in the drawing-room.

"Sir John looked at me with a face almost of indignation, but full with astonishment.

He said "I know it must be unintentional on your part to say anything to wound my susceptibilities, as you cannot possibly know anything of the circumstances which I am about to mention. Those particular chairs to which you have alluded are never occupied. The chair in the drawing-room you have just mentioned was that which was occupied by my daughter in her lifetime, and the place at this table was that at which she invariably sat. We hold them both sacred since her death; not a soul has ever sat in either the one or the other since we lost our darling treasure three months since. You must be labouring under a mistake which is perfectly unaccountable to me. I beg you will make no further reference to this painful subject. Forgive me, pray, if I appear in the least abrupt to you, but in her we lost our only child. If you will take no more wine we will join Lady——"

"I followed him, for he went hurriedly out, evidently agitated much at the thoughts that were in his mind. I followed him, determined to ask an explanation of this, to me, extraordinary state of circumstances from my fellow-traveller when the opportunity presented itself, as I had no doubt it would.

"When I entered the drawing-room she was not there."

"I have never seen her since."

"You may think it odd, as I myself have often done since, on pondering the matter over, that I did not endeavour to find out who this mysterious lady was. Curiously enough, whether my mind was so much engrossed with the experiment I was making, or from whatever other cause I can't pretend to say, she seemed entirely dismissed from my mind, beyond the fact that I came to the mental conclusion that she was a 'lady help' or 'companion' to Lady——, and as such was naturally interested in the experiment I was about to make. I did not think anything of not meeting her again, as I imagined that her duties in one or other of the capacities I have just mentioned would naturally militate against the chance of my seeing much of her, the more particularly as I spent the whole of the rest of my time during my stay in the apartments set apart for my peculiar use, even to taking all my meals in them."

But I won't attempt to theorise, but get back to the facts.

"The next day, after breakfast, Sir John begged a few words with me in his sanctum. He explained, with apologies for his shortness the previous evening, that the object for which I had come on the recommendation of Q— was to endeavour to make a portrait of his late daughter, simply from the description that he and his wife could give me of her appearance. They had absolutely nothing to help me beyond their description of her. Not a photograph, not a sketch of any sort, not even a *silhouette*. He did not expect me to make a true and faithful likeness of her from such meagre resources, but hoped I should be able to produce a picture that had some sort of resemblance, however vague, to their dear child. I could only say that I would do my best, but warned him that it was likely, nay almost certain, to prove a thorough disappointment. Let me be brief. For a long time I tried sketch after sketch, but all with the same result, not unnaturally—total failure.

"At length, in a state of semi-exasperation, to which pitch both Sir John and Lady—— must have also have arrived even long before, though they were kindness and patience combined, I appealed to her ladyship. 'Can you give me no further clue, no distinguishing peculiarity, no mark of any sort that might cause some sort of resemblance, even if the *tout ensemble* is unlike?'

"No; her ladyship could think of nothing—nothing particular whatever, further than what they had been able to tell—unless a mole on the left cheek could help me at all. A mole on the left cheek! My heart gave a bound as if it would leap out of my body. I made a hurried excuse for stopping work, saying that I would try what I could do by the following morning. When left alone, I sat down, and with the memory of my fair travelling companion before me, I produced that sketch. Every feature was before me, every expression, as I painted it. I worked *con amore*. With what result? I sent for Sir John and her ladyship the next morning. I unveiled that sketch for the first time. I unveiled it for you to-day for the second. The result electrified me. They neither broke the silence for many minutes. Sir John spoke first; he only said—

"It is our darling herself."

"His wife echoed: 'Her very self.'"

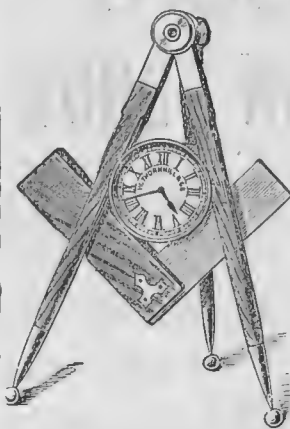
The finished picture, of which this is the first idea, was equally successful. That is all I have to tell; that is the mystery of my *Veiled Picture*.

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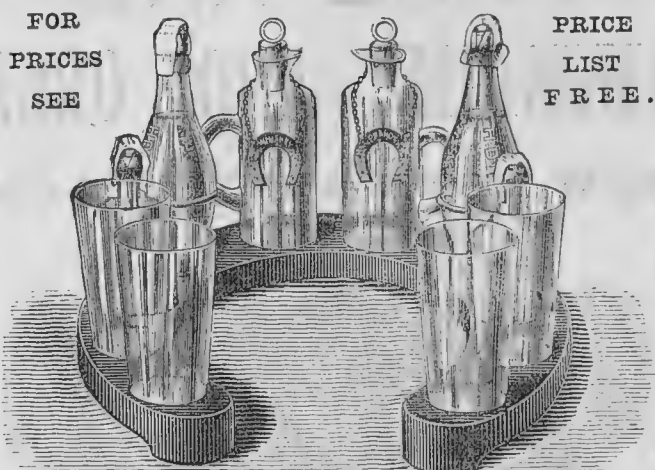
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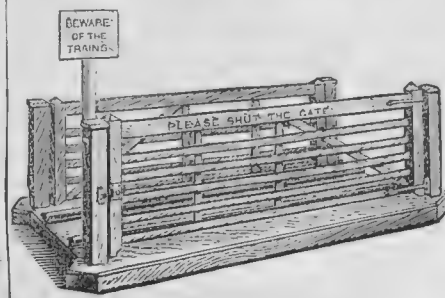
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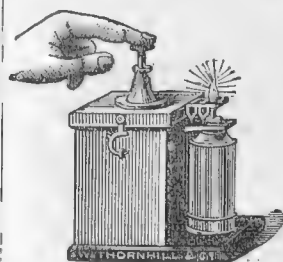
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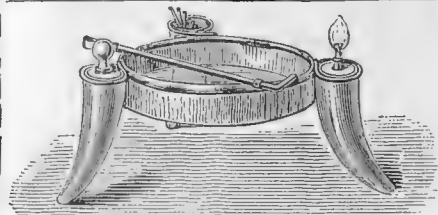
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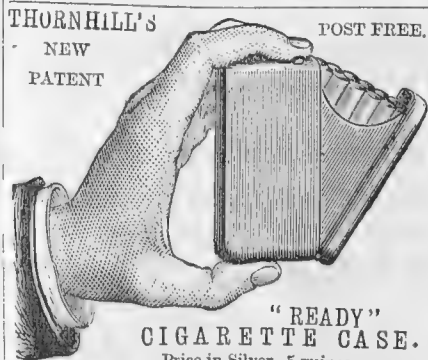
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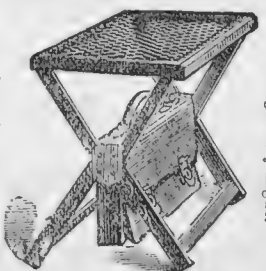


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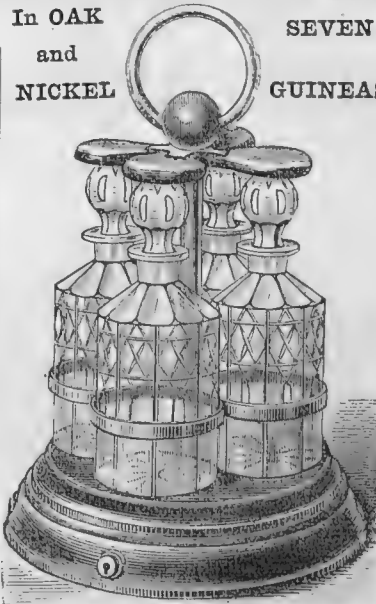


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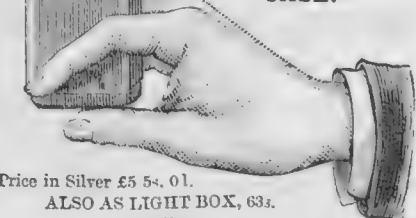


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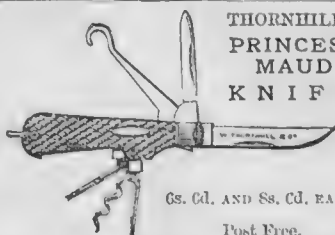
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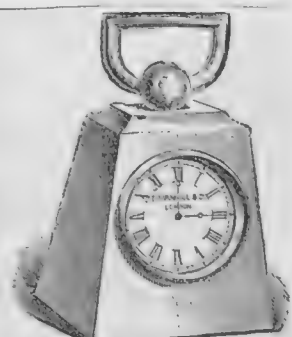
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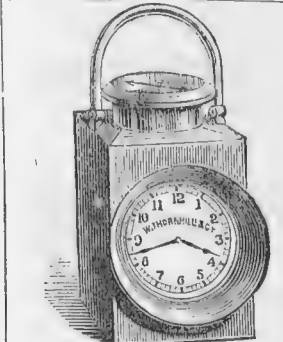


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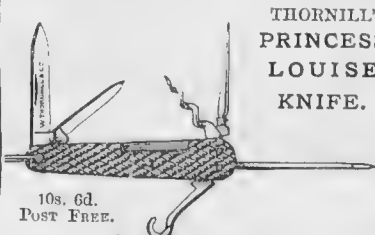
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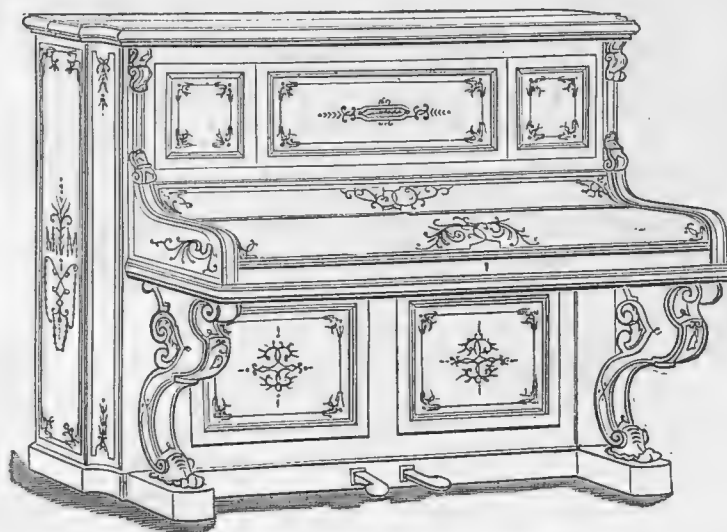
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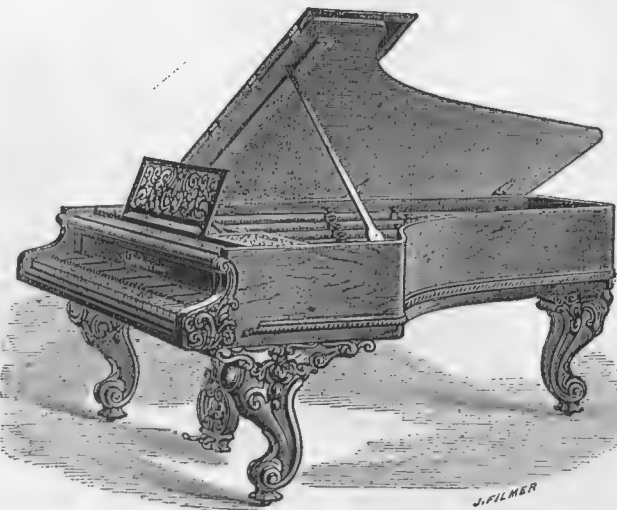
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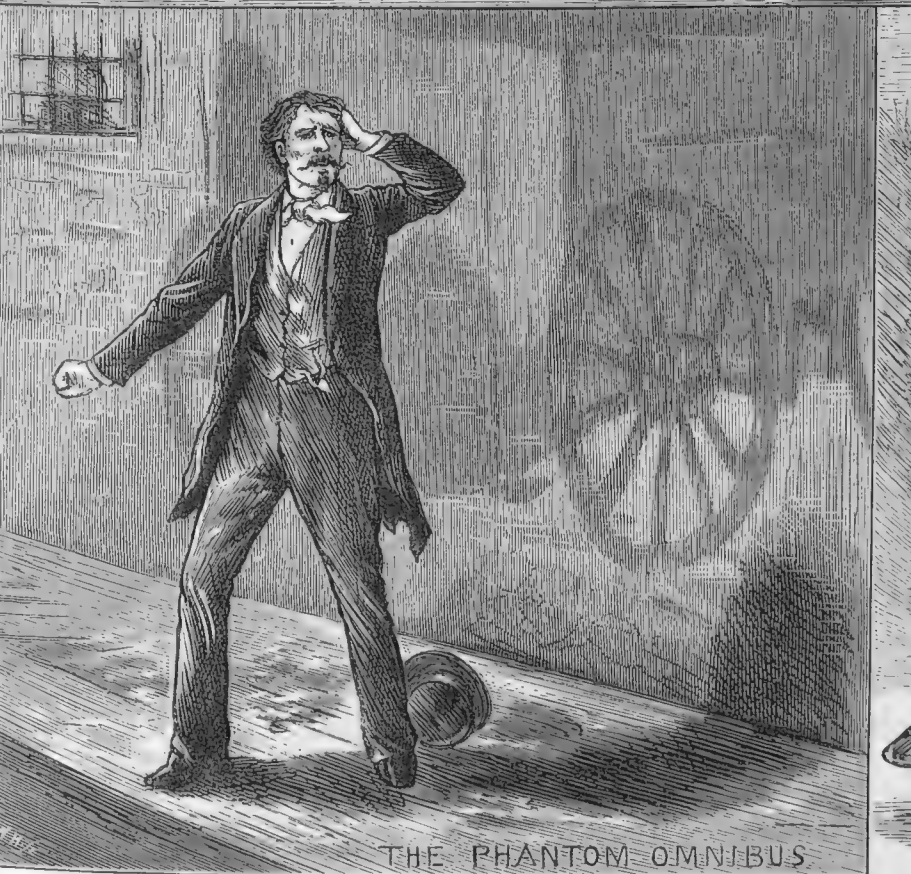
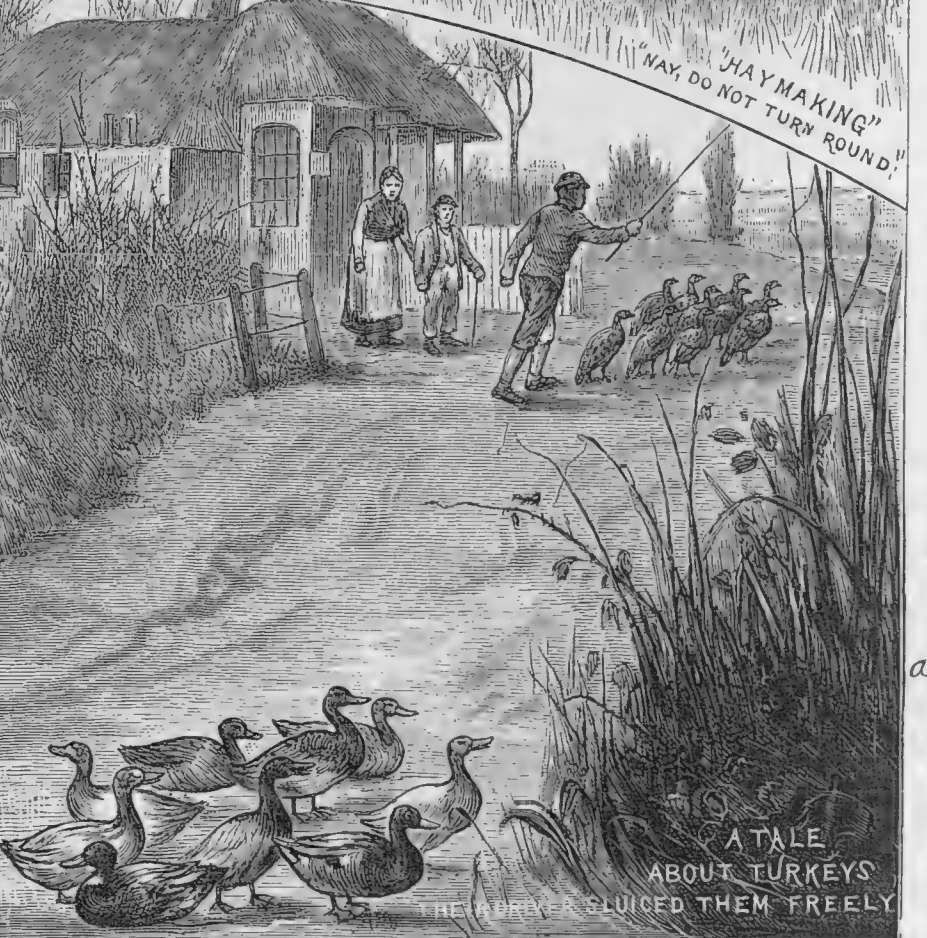
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THE ILLUSTRATED

Sporting and Dramatic News.

LONDON, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1879.

"HAYMAKING."

BY THE HON. LEWIS WINGFIELD,

Author of "Lady Grizel," "My Lords of Strogue," &c.

"MARRY AN ACTRESS?" Why not? Actresses are but women, with the faults inherent in the sex a trifle more accentuated than usual. Do you know that I—sober, plodding, pury, grey-headed man of business though I am—was myself within an ace of taking to my bosom a comédienne? You look surprised. Maybe your eyes will open wider when I tell you that I love her still, or, rather, the memory of what she was. Poor Adèle! Wealth was the god of her idolatry, and in those days I was not rich. Yes; poor Adèle. She lingers still, although it would have been better for her had she died long since. Even after all these years I cannot think of her without a sigh. She is wealthy; and enjoys good health, and has no husband to beat her black and blue. You cannot solve my riddle? This is how it was:—

When I was quite a youth, a student of the Sorbonne at Paris, I did pretty much what other youths of my age and condition were in the habit of doing. In other words, I neglected my studies; joined the jolly band of Comus, which passed its joyous nights with wine and snowy-capped grisettes in the sky-parlour of one or other of the crew; went tick for dinner, and did without wood or candle in my modest room, in order to afford my zinc ticket for the play. In fact, I wasted my educational opportunities as golden youth will do so long as the world goes round. My only books were women's looks, as the poet hath it—the looks of every damsel with a neat ankle in the Quartier Latin. A fig for architecture, I said; half a fig for the mysteries of hydraulics, hydrostatics, what not! I was eighteen, with warm blood running through my veins. My profession was to be that of a civil engineer. What a dull profession; what a stupid prospect! There was plenty of time to think of that. Life was long, and I stood but on its threshold. In a word, I was an idle scapegrace.

But a change came o'er my conduct, and in this wise. One evening at the Odéon I beheld a lovely vision—a slender, fair-haired girl, a débutante; and at the first sight of her my heart stood still. There was about her an air of purity and innocence which made me feel vile and mud-smirched. By the light of her deep blue eyes I looked into myself, and became aware of how graceless a creature I was. Then, borrowing from my neighbour a lorgnette, I gazed at her hungrily, and hugged myself with a secret joy. Her part was an insignificant one. She wore a plain muslin robe without a trinket. She was evidently poor and humblelike myself. Perhaps she would trudge homeward when the play was done in broken shoes, to cook her aged mother's supper. Why should I not go and assist her in the holy task? And then, as I dreamed I became miserable. There was a refined something about this beautiful girl that seemed to say "hands off!" An independent springiness of gait, a haughty bearing. I breathed so hard, as with clenched fists and set teeth I strove to devise a scheme for scraping acquaintance with my charmer, that my neighbour in the gallery good-humouredly nudged me with his elbow and inquired if I felt unwell.

I gave up gay supper parties, and crooned alone over my fireless grate, saving up my francs to buy a lorgnette for myself, wherewithal to feast my eyes without stint by an uninterrupted contemplation of my goddess. The more I saw of her the more I adored the whisk of her floating robe, the bows on her dainty little shoes. One evening as, biting my nails, I hovered like a ghost about the precincts of the theatre, I became aware of an altercation—a quarrel. Someone was speaking earnestly in a low voice; another voice was raised high in indignation. Heavens! It was my voice! Hurrying up without giving myself time to think, I crossed the sacred threshold which leads by a flight of stairs to the stage-door. By the flickering light of a gas-jet I beheld Adèle engaged in conversation with a man whose back was turned to me. Hearing my footsteps she looked up, and with a winning, candid smile held out her hand to me at once.

"This gentleman will see me home," she said, with a superb curtsy to my rival (for I felt he was my rival), as she laid her tiny hand upon my arm. I moved along as in a dream, or rather as if under a delicious charm woven by those fairy fingers. She was by my side; her arm was within mine; oh! ecstasy! she treated me like an old friend. Was I awake or sleeping? By and by, glancing timidly in her face, I ventured to murmur something idiotic in the way of compliment, which foolish temerity of empty-headed boyhood she proceeded swiftly to repress.

"You are an honest man," she said, with delightful abruptness. "I am a woman with eyes and ears, and cannot but be flattered by the silent homage you have been paying me this long while, as night after night you have paced with a respectful step the Odéon Colonnade. I am alone and unprotected. You feel an interest in me? You shall be my brother. Come; that I may present you to my mother."

A brother's place in her affections! This was not what I had projected in my warm imagining. But much was already gained, so I was perforce content.

"Who was the gentleman," I asked, "to whom you were speaking under the gas-jet?"

"The Duc de Brionne," grave Adèle replied. "He was very rude to me."

I stood still in the narrow street and shivered with indignation.

"Que voulez-vous!" remarked my beautiful companion; "an

actress must expect to be insulted. You are wasting your steam, young man.”

Then, as we walked to her humble lodging on the Boulevard Extérieur, she graciously informed me, to set my mind at rest, that the Duc de Brionne was a celebrated *bon viveur*, that he deemed all to be fish that came to his net, that his age was eighty-two, that he was more than half imbecile, and that I was but a simple young person to take the vapid vagaries of an octogenarian so much to heart. After this we trudged through the mire in silence, for somehow I felt a wall growing imperceptibly betwixt me and the adored one. There was a hard intangible worldliness about the fair *ingénue* which jarred upon my nerves. At her door I left her, and wandered for hours along the ghostly boulevard which, within the fortified line, encircled Paris, musing over what she had said. She had said nothing to which I could reasonably take offence; and yet there was something which seemed to go ill with her limpid eyes and fawn-like carriage. My mind was overwrought; I felt feverish and out of sorts. I was blurring the idol with the fetid vapour of my own evil thoughts. With much self-upbraiding I retired to bed and slept.

I will not weary you, old friend, with a recital of all that passed. As the moth is to the candle, so was I to Adèle. It was the old story. I made the acquaintance of her mother, a dear old lady, who thanked me for my goodness to her unprotected child. Every Sunday I was their honoured guest; and it did my heart good to mark the younger woman's tenderness, her *calineries*, the thousand and one feathers whereby I could trace the blowing of the breeze. I grew to love Adèle passionately—all the more, perhaps, on account of the singular contradictions that made up her character; and I am one of those queer men who give their love but once. She was an embodiment of everything, was this strange girl. She was innocent, she was worldly (awfully worldly every now and then), but she was always sweet-tempered and gentle, and always a vision of loveliness. I talked to her of my future, of how she had set my ambition in a flame, of how I would carve for her sake an undying reputation, of how I would be a Paxton, a Stephenson, and a Brunel all rolled into one; of how I would garner riches for her behoof, in order that she might recline on brodered cushions and rest her feet some day upon the *chef d'œuvre* of Indian and of Persian looms. She would listen without motion for a while to my word-pictures, then turn impatiently from me. Once she clasped my burning face between her hands and looked with a searching frown into my eyes, then, wearily sighing, muttered, “Oh, you fool! by the time you have made your wealth I shall be toothless and a hundred.” I could not quite make out my heart's adored, but she bewitched me. The less I understood the more I loved the siren.

By and by her manner altered, and she grew hard and reckless. She had but little histrionic talent, but her beauty soon procured for her the rôles for which more clever women sighed in vain. She became the vogue, the rage. All Paris crossed the river and took tickets at the Odéon. All the *gommeux* besieged the reigning beauty with their addresses; *vitrines* on both sides of the Seine teemed with portraits of the fashionable actress. For a time I observed with relief that she distinguished none above his fellows, and there is safety in numbers, you know. At last, to my horror and amazement, the Sultana threw her handkerchief. To whom? To the old Duc de Brionne—the millionaire—the imbecile octogenarian! Vainly I remonstrated, begged, implored, commanded. “I must make hay while the sun shines,” was all she deigned to say with a head-toss to me ere I was sent packing; but looking over her shoulder at her reflection in the looking-glass I saw an expression there that frightened and yet comforted me. She was doing what she did with a set and deliberately coldblooded purpose; and yet she hated herself so for what she was impelled to do by that panting after luxury, which was a second nature, that I forgave her then and there, and loved her image still.

Once more—only once—I sat in my accustomed place among the audience and drank in her wondrous beauty. She was in white satin, I remember, profusely trimmed with pearls; a divinely lovely woman. The leering old satyr whom I loathed was grinning in the stage-box. Presently he flung a huge bouquet at her feet, from which rolled a diamond necklace. She bowed low and clasped it to her breast. Sickened and half-blind, I groped my way out of the theatre. Next morning there was a sensation for the jaded world of fashion. The half-witted old imbecile, de Brionne, had left Paris with half-a-hundred packages, and with him was his new Duchess, Adèle, the divinity whom Paris worshipped.

The light of the sun was odious to me. I abhorred my native land; for a time I succumbed altogether; then I rose up gaunt and haggard from the bed of sickness, and accepted a post in distant Algeria in connection with the planning of some post-roads. There, as you know, I remained some years, and after that returned to France.

My first questions, as you may suppose, related to the fate of Adèle. No one knew aught of her. She was dead probably. Her mother had retired long since to Père-la-Chaise. The hoary Duke was still alive, vegetating somewhere in retirement on his estates. I sighed over the mysterious fate of the beautiful girl, and was soon wholly engrossed by the flow of my business.

It happened that shortly after my return home I was despatched with an assistant into Picardy to superintend the engineering of a railway, and it also chanced that, as is not uncommon, difficulties were thrown in our way by the pig-headed landed proprietors. It became my duty to interview the maire. I told him that it was absolutely necessary that I should be enabled to visit a particular château which stood surrounded by umbrageous woods in the centre of the plain. “You don't mean to say that you want to pull it down?” cried he, aghast. These country mayors are so stupid! “By no means,” I replied, “but I must draw out a plan of appropriation to be submitted to government, for it is clear that the projected line must run through some portion of the park, and for that purpose I must have free access to the grounds. Would M. le Maire accompany me thither?”

A look of strange terror flitted over the countenance of the official as he excused himself hurriedly on the plea of an appointment. Hastily writing an order to the concierge of the château, he bowed me out with, as I thought, scant ceremony; but I had no time for the consideration of such a trifle, and taking the written order, strode down alone to the ancestral iron gates, which were flanked by two huge golden griffins. The bell rang with a sepulchral sound, as though it were affrighted by its own echo. I pulled it again and again, and whilst awaiting an answer to my summons could not help marvelling at the neglected air of all I saw. The trees of the avenue feathered down so low that it was evident no carriage ever passed under their shade. The road itself was choked with weeds and moss. A weird place, belonging, evidently, to some absentee proprietor.

“What a pity it is,” I began to moralise, “that proprietors should not live on their estates,” when abruptly round a corner hobbled a crone, who eyed me with the same strange look of terror as M. le Maire had done, when I told my business and demanded to have the gate opened. Fearfully she looked at me, then at the order, then down the mossy avenue, muttering to herself under her breath.

“Fear nothing,” I remarked, “your absent master will not scold you. That order, signed by the Maire of the arrondissement, will hold you scot free, as far as my intrusion is concerned.”

Eying me up and down, she kept twisting the paper in her gnarled hands irresolutely, then suddenly making up her mind, flung the gate wide, croaking as she did so—

“Well, have your way, and much pleasure may your prying give you. My master is not absent. I have no master nor yet a mistress; and yet I have both. There, go your ways; I've no time to waste on you.”

Very much surprised at this singular greeting, I went towards the house, feeling somehow a vague dread of I knew not what. Absolute stillness everywhere. A grass-grown courtyard. An open hall-door, without a sign of life within. Yet, stay! a glove was lying on the carpet and by its side a garden-knife, still wet with the morning's pruning.

“Is this the palace of the sleeping Princess?” I muttered, as I passed out into the garden. “How very odd. It makes me feel quite nervous.”

An old-fashioned, gloomy garden with yew-hedges clipped into fantastic shapes. On the grass a great heap of toys, balls, balloons, gilded hoops, and tin trumpets; a host of gaily-attired dolls, clad in fashionable gear, stared at me with round, unblinking eyes. Had I taken leave of my senses, or was I the victim of a nightmare? What could all this mean? In a *bosquet* hard by reclined a lady, richly dressed and young, so far as I could judge from a back view, who started up with a cry and made off hastily on the apparition of a stranger. This was too much; the situation seemed to me ridiculous, *en plein dix-neuvième siècle*, so I pursued and overtook her, whereupon she stopped and faced me. It was now my turn to start and shrink; for—yes—it was Adèle, my beautiful Adèle—beautiful no more! Some terrible accident had disfigured her so completely that her face was a hideous mask. We stood staring one at the other, the hearts of both too full for speech; until there issued with a whoop from a side alley a figure still more tragic in that it was grotesque. It was that of an aged man, palsied and bent, attired in the costume of a child of seven, short tunic and frilled trowsers, bib, and red morocco shoes—the panoply of childhood was all there; a frame to an old, old face, about which fluttered gay ribbons, while a jaunty straw-hat was perched on his bald pate. This weird figure tottered up to Adèle and held out a tattered kite, with a ghastly senile imitation of a child's artless gambols—

“Ohè, ma bonne!” he mumbled, “I am hungry and tired of play. Give me my milk and put me into bed.” Taking his gouty and chalkstoned hand, she led her charge into the house without a word, motioning me to await her return.

“That voice, which used to thrill me with unearthly happiness. Yes, it was the same,” I mused in deep astonishment. “It certainly was Adèle; but oh! how fearfully, how horribly changed. Poor, poor girl!”

“Yes, it is Adèle,” she replied, coming up softly from behind. “Nay, do not turn round; I cannot bear it. Let us speak so, without looking at one another; then you can go your ways into the world again and leave me in my tomb.”

Standing thus, with her hand clasped in mine, she told me her story. It gushed forth like a pent-up torrent, and then came blinding tears, which did her good.

Recurring to the past, she whispered that before she resolved to marry the rich Duke she had debated long and anxiously. Her good and bad angels, so she put it, had wrestled for her soul, and the bad one, as is usually the case, gained the victory. Beauty, she argued, had been bestowed as a marketable ware to be sold to the highest bidder for her own worldly advantage. It surely was not given for nothing—in mere mockery? Love in a cottage with a struggling engineer, though delightful in theory, would have proved impossible in practice. Therefore, for both our sakes, she had taken the onus on herself, snapped the chain that bound us, and deliberately sold her hand. The worldly portion of her character had gained the upper hand, but retribution followed swiftly on her fault. On the very evening when she and de Brionne arrived at this retired château, where they were to have billed and cooed like turtle-doves, a change came over her new master. What it was that gave the final blow to his already shaken reason she never knew. Be that what it might, whilst he was sitting at her feet after dinner on that first evening, he suddenly cried out that baby was fatigued and nurse was very naughty. At first she thought it was a jest and rallied him. Then he became furious and she grew frightened. Finally, in his insane rage, he seized a brand from the hearth, and deliberately fired her dress in several places, screaming out that “nurse must be punished.”

The servants rushed in to find their lord a maniac.

The unfortunate girl escaped with life, but was fearfully disfigured. The world was no more for her, and she had settled down to do her miserable duty and tend the poor lunatic.

She was alone in the world—without a friend. Ever to appear again upon the stage was of course out of the question. And so here she lived like a recluse, awaiting the hour of his passing with such patience as she could muster, and had lived, ever since that fatal night.

“Now, farewell,” she said; “for it is not good for him to see strangers;” and so dismissed me, remarking, with a pressure of the hand and a touch of her flippant manner in old days, “You see that I am still trying to make hay, though for me the sun shines no longer.”

OUR ILLUSTRATIONS.

SLEEPING BEAUTY.

By “RAPIER.”

HUSH! From her hand the poet's words have slipped,
The old-world story told in noble numbers;

Adown her eyes the lids have gently dipped,
Her soul has sunk to rest in peaceful slumbers.

Across the carved oak the firelight falls
In shine and shadow as the flames are leaping;

Upon her from the castle's ancient walls
Her ancestors their silent watch are keeping.

Back to the lists where knights with plumes a-flaunt,
Steel-clad and mounted for the coming tourney—

Men that no deed of daring e'er could daunt—
Her spirit flies upon its mystic journey.

Sounds of her distant champion's trumpet float
Upon the breeze to eager ears that listen,

And ere the echoes lose the welcome note
Sunrays upon his golden helmet glisten.

And are there now no hearts as staunch and true
As those which beat in days of ancient story,

No hands and brains as ready to pursue
The path that leads to honour, love, and glory?

The vision changes: 'fore her closed eyes
Appears there one e'er first in knightly duty,—

The features of her own true love arise
To glad the dreamings of the Sleeping Beauty.

PEACE.

A CYNIC'S IDYLL.

By H. SAVILE CLARKE.

With lips that out-rival the roses,
With hair that the sunlight enchains,
Far fairer than flowers in her posies,
As sweet as their scent after rains.
She stands in the Vicarage garden,
With fortunate buds in her arms;
Yet somehow I'm able to harden
My heart 'gainst her charms.

I say to myself that those lashes,
Down-dropped so demurely to-day,
Can rise, when beneath them out-flashes
The glance that can scare and can slay.
That marriage develops a temper;
That woman was born to perplex;
That Virgil's “*mutabile semper*”
Was true of her sex.

Mayhap she'll turn Ritualistic,
And keep every new-fangled feast,
Work monograms monkish and mystic
For some oleaginous priest.
Or else, with a daring defiance
Of womanly views, she will be
A slave to the teaching of science,—
A female M.D.

'Tis true that it's something ecstatic
To feel her swing round in the dance,
And e'en the most dull and phlegmatic
Of Teutons would thrill at her glance.
I bow in subjection before her,
Such beauty might well crown one's life,
Yet know, as I almost adore her,
I don't want a wife.

Her lips would up-curl in derision,
Could heart ever see into heart;
Yet trust me, oh! beautiful vision,
'Tis better for both we should part.
One day I shall feel that while only
A strong hand could win my release,
Though haply my fireside be lonely,
I sit there—in peace.

FOR LIFE OR DEATH.

By “AMPHION.”

With what a glamour-glow of sentiment
Doth action, speed, and zeal in some good cause
Invest the commonest of earthly things!
The plainest visage into sudden change
By pity, grief, love, mercy's force betray'd,
Is kindled to the seeming of a god's:
And not the meanest of insensate things
But wears the impress of exalted worth
When, for the moment turned to man's high use,
It ministers to health, wealth, safety—all
That makes life worth the living. “Life or death”—
This is the brief impassioned monologue
That raises beings, circumstances, things
From out the cramped monotony of prose
To something half akin to poetry.
“For life or death”—how soon, in such a strait,
The bare suspicion of impending woes,
The thought of danger bridges o'er the gulf
That sunders dull and torpid commonplace
From bright and chivalrous romance! 'Tis like
The sunset glow in richest glory cast
O'er arid, flat, and barren wilderness,
O'er trackless seas that lap a marshy shore,
O'er leaden clouds the sport of piping winds!
Yet doth each hillock in the sullen plain,
Each wavelet swelling in the watery waste,
Each fleecy fleeting vapour onward borne,
Touched by a transient gleam, to art appeal,
And wake the soul of poetry to life.
The craft, in rude blasts of the Equinox
Whose aid the shipwrecked mariner invokes,
Designed on cumbrous lines, and darkly housed
In some lone cave beside its native deep—
There dwells around it no poetic touch,
No halo of romance, till fraught with life,
It rides the yeasty waves to 'counter death.
E'en so, when devastating fire's alarm
At night arising, stirs to fever-throb
The quickened pulse of all the country round;
When startled rustics flock by devious paths
To where the homestead, wrapped in lambent flames,
Sets all the cloudy canopy aglow—
The engine, speeding on its dusty course
Through tracks unused to wildly whirling wheels,
Assumes such aspect, as it were it came
In semblance of a king's triumphal car:
As if the plain red box, for use designed,
Were wrought in classic fashion; and the hinds
Perched high above were officers of state,
In place of yokels summoned in hot haste,
From aloof house bench, from homely hearth and bed,
To lend a helping hand: as if the steeds,
Working with such good will, were Phaëton's,
And he the holder of the reins, in place
Of nags recruited from each village byre,
Resting their limbs awhile from hard day's work
In plough, in shafts, in plodding weary rounds,
To rouse the sleeping country side. They come;
Dumb wonder stares from many a cottage door,
Or cheers arise from urchin levies, bent
On midnight tramp through mazy lanes, to where
Destruction reigns supreme o'er ruined homes.
“For life or death.” On these few simple words
Hangs all the secret of the heroic light
Which plays around, and gilds, and sanctifies
The dull prosaic instruments of men
Pressed into service of Humanity.
What if the transitory glory fade
Too quickly? Have not noble ends been won,
High purposes achieved? 'Twere better thus,
Than that the calm of dreary commonplace
Should rest unbroken, and the wheels of life
Revolve for aye in one unchanging groove.
Soon, when the fever of excitement cools,
We bow to dull monotony again
And staid Routine resumes her ancient throne.

TO ALL WHO SHAVE.—LLOYD'S EUXESIS—which requires neither soap nor water, is soothing to the most irritable skin. In Tubes, price 1s. 6d., of all Chemists and Perfumers. CAUTION.—The genuine Euxesis bears the name of Aimée Lloyd on cap of tube, and “Prepared only by his Widow,” in red ink across labels. Manufactory, 3, Spur-street, Leicester-square. Refuse all others.

FIRM FRIENDS.

BETWEEN the children and the donkey there exists the firmest friendship, and when the eldest daughter went out with her little brother to gather holly and mistletoe to decorate the old farm house at the festive season, of course the donkey went to help by carrying the greenery. The little fair-haired girl has been ill, and could not accompany the Christmas expedition, but she has been waiting with some of the leaves of which the donkey is fondest, and when she saw the procession turn into the lane she ran to the barn-door to show her four-legged friend that he was not forgotten. The sturdy little boy is half inclined to offer his apple to the donkey, but on the other hand, half inclined to eat it himself; and is inwardly debating how he can divide it so that each has his share. Meantime the birds, knowing that the arrival of the children generally means some welcome crumbs, are beginning to assemble. The donkey warmly reciprocates the affection, and shows it by every means in his power. We may hope that in after life all their friendships may prove as strong and true as that which exists between the old donkey and his little master and mistresses.

One of the pictures by our artist, Mr. G. A. Holmes (the child and the dog, entitled "Can't you Talk?") hangs on the walls of thousands of nurseries, and we think the children will be pleased to put our present contribution—a picture painted at an old Kentish farm house—by the side of their favourite.

MOTHER'S DARLING.

WORDS are scarcely needed to tell what this picture signifies. The mother holds her child in her arms as for the first time she teaches it to lisp out "Merry Christmas!"

THE JOLLY LAPLANDER.

IT is Christmas all the world over, and here is the youthful Laplander, driving his big reindeer merrily across the perpetual snow to a friendly hut, where a choice repast of whale blubber and seal steak awaits him.

W A R.

HERE is a portrait from life of a gallant sailor who, though not born under English skies, is proud to serve Her Majesty the Queen. Happily, this Christmas time our sailors' chief attacks will be directed on the steaming plum puddings, to which the cook has given his best attention. But if our holly and mistletoe-clad homes are threatened, it is pleasant to think that a living bulwark of such stout hearts as this is ready to stand up and fight for England.

CHRISTMAS ON THE TOWING PATH.

THIS is certainly not the weather for horses to be out. With the snow on the ground and ice beneath hunting is out of the question; animals that are being trained for coming events are causing the gravest anxiety to those who have the care of them; my lady's hack stands in comfortable warm clothing in its own box at the end of the well-ventilated stables, while grooms are keeping Christmas in the servants' hall. But on the towing path things are different. The barge has to complete its journey by a certain date, and if the weather be unsuitable for the horse—so much the worse for him. His master inside is smoking his pipe, sheltered in the hutch that does duty for a cabin; for he knows that his old four-legged servant will go on safely enough without guidance. And so, though his fare is hard and his rest little, the old horse patiently plods along on his way.

"HER LORD AND MASTER."

SNOW covers the landscape and there is more to come, as the clouds plainly indicate, but she is not cold—her load keeps her warm—as she trudges on in the wake of "her lord and master," who for his part walks easily, for his burden is light and his pipe consoles him. He is tolerably indifferent to the weather, as his open collar shows; but he dislikes taking trouble, and if his wife is with him nothing seems more natural to her lord and master than that she should carry the bundle, huge and unwieldy as it is, and, as we may think, not quite the sort of thing for a girl to labour along under. There is no disputing the orders of this wayside monarch, however, and it is not so much the weather as the rough word he has just hurled at it that makes the dog put his tail between his legs. Let us hope that the tinker has his good points somewhere, and that there is rest and shelter at the end of the journey for those whose lots are cast in with his.

A TIGHT CARTRIDGE.

FROM the other side of the world an old contributor, Mr. A. B. Frost, has sent this addition to our Christmas number. Under his painting he has written "A tight cartridge and both dogs standing, 'Look dah, massa!'" But the picture is eloquent enough without the legend to explain it. This unaccustomed sportsman has gone out shooting with a borrowed gun, with two dogs thoroughly up to their business, and with a darkey boy who has a more or less faint smattering of his. The duty of the latter is to carry the game home—that is of course to say if there should happen to be any. So far his chances have been few, and the almost empty game-bag shows that when birds have risen, the gun has not been held straight enough for the purpose. No sooner has he emptied the two barrels than both dogs begin to act in a way which proclaims that there is something in the wind, or rather that there will be in a very few moments, for feather

or fur lies hid in the long grass. This is the chance of retrieving a bad day. The sportsman opens his breechloader to pull out the empty cartridge case, but—his face and figure tell the rest of the story. The case is wedged in firmly, and will not be dislodged; he cannot lead again, and at any second the creatures which have attracted the attention of the dogs may be a-foot or flying. The little darkey understands that game is about, but does not understand the mechanism of a breechloader, and with a look of innocent and engaging wonder on his face, says simply, "Look, massa!" and points towards a scene the significance of which the gunner knows full well. Even if the cartridge case "gives," and he manages to load again, the flurry and anxiety is not in favour of straight shooting. The dogs will soon be disgusted, the darkey will begin to think there is something wrong with massa, and massa himself will either come to the conclusion that shooting is not his forte, or—if he be an irreclaimable donkey—wonder what he took to disagree with him and spoil his deadly aim?

TWO TO ONE.

IT is thus that the Christmas Eve is spent in the cottage, over the absorbing game of all-fours. Two to one does not make fair odds, the more so as it is evident that the dame who is exposing her cards to the friend behind her has a capital hand, while her adversary has nothing but a beggarly array of threes and fours. The smoker points with his "churchwarden" to the cards which he sees, without any knowledge of the adversary's hand, will be enough to win the game, for evidently it is all over with the lady in spectacles.

SEEING THE OLD FOLKS HOME.

GRANDPAPA and Grandma have left the Christmas party early, under the escort of two young members of the family. Snow is falling and the moon, which has been overcast, suddenly emerges from the clouds as they cross the plank bridge over the little rushing brook-let. The stir at the old manor house has startled a wakeful owl, which in turn startles the old lady, who tightly clutches the rail, while the old gentleman, full of good wine and rather uncertain on his legs, drops his stick as he staggers into the arms of his supporter.

A CHRISTMAS DREAM.

UPON the table by the artist's bed lies open the letter which caused his dream. He has gone to sleep thinking about it, when the waits have come, and the man with the horn in E flat, who usually plays more out of time than the other instruments, seems to have his dreadful weapon at the artist's very ear; whereupon he dreams a dream. Elves, merry but determined, come and drag him to where the Christmas number, "Holly Leaves," is waiting for the result of his picturesque fancies. He must not be idle, for to be idle is as bad as to be greedy, and then he remembers another dream which came to him on a former Christmas, in the days of his childhood, when he had eaten too much dinner—how a dreadful pudding with holly ears, shining almond teeth, and arms cunningly constructed of spoon and fork, seized him in its fell embrace, and, opening a cavern of a mouth, came very near indeed to swallowing him whole. What is he to do? Visions of pantomime flit through his head—Bluebeard with his Keys, Beauty and the Beast, Jack the Giant Killer, with clown, columbine, harlequin, and pantaloons in waiting, and the policeman dimly seen through the fog. If he does not distinguish himself in this Christmas number, the radiant creature he adores, and who of course forms the central feature of his dreams, will frown upon him and pay heed to some of the rivals that hover around her. What then, once more, shall he set to work on? Happy thought! Why not his curious dream? And here it is!

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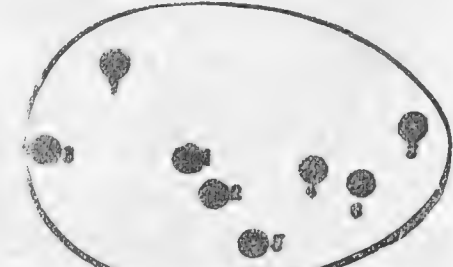
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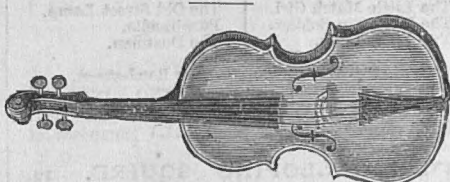
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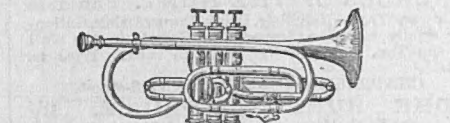
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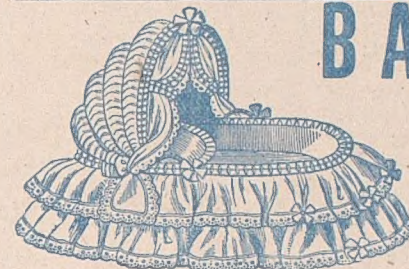
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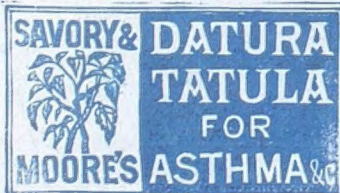
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